

The Battle of McDowell, Virginia May 8, 1862

By George Weimer Goldthorpe

I

General Background and Federal Position in This Entire Area

At 4:30 on the afternoon of May 8, 1862, the Battle of McDowell, Virginia, took place. This was the climax of the beginning of "Stonewall" Jackson's famous Shenandoah Valley Campaign in the War Between the States. Many people think that this was a brilliant victory of Jackson's and that it had a great effect on the whole picture of the war. Col. G. F. R. Henderson in his book, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War*,¹ is of this opinion. Others think that the Battle of McDowell was just a small incident in the war, and as much a victory of the Federals as of the Confederates. This was the opinion of the Federal leaders involved in the battle (Milroy, Schenck, and Fremont) and others. But before I discuss the battle and its significance, the background and the events immediately preceding the battle must be described.

The Shenandoah Valley in Virginia is a beautiful and rich valley with the North and South Branches of the Shenandoah River joining to form the Shenandoah River and flowing down to the Potomac River in the north. This Valley is bound on the east by the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, running north and south. On the west the Valley is bounded by the extensive Allegheny Mountains. The North and South Branches of the Shenandoah River along the center of the Valley are divided by the Massanutten Mountains, running north and south also. The Massanutten begin in the north where the Shenandoah divides into its two branches. This mountain range continues southward to Harrisonburg, and the only place to cross the Massanutten between these two points is by a small pass in the middle, near Luray.

Early in 1862, General Thomas J. Jackson was retreating up the Valley from Kernstown, Virginia, where he had just been defeated by the Union Generals, N. P. Banks and James Shields. At this time General McClellan with about 120,000

¹ G. F. R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War* (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1913), Vol. I.

men was beginning a march up the Virginia peninsula, between the James and York Rivers toward Richmond. General Magruder, and later General Johnston, with about 53,000 Confederates were able to stop him for a time at Yorktown. A Federal force of about 40,000 men under General McDowell was on the north bank of the Rappahannock, near Fredericksburg, waiting for the signal to march to Richmond, and in the meantime protecting Washington. General Johnston was facing him until Johnston left for the Virginia peninsula. About 19,000 Union men under General Fremont were in western Virginia to threaten Jackson's left, and to try to march on Richmond from that direction. And as stated before, General Banks and General Shields were in the Shenandoah Valley, chasing Jackson back up the Valley, and possibly to Richmond. Between these various forces, the Federals had almost 200,000 men involved in various drives headed towards Richmond.

Now let us look at the forces opposing Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley. President Lincoln unwisely divided the command in this area into three separate departments, and their only connecting link was the direction of either the President or the Secretary of War. These three departments were the Department of the Rappahannock under General McDowell, the Department of the Shenandoah under General Banks, and the Mountain Department under General Fremont. The Department of the Rappahannock included the protection of Washington, D. C. McDowell's Corps was withheld from McClellan's Peninsula Army in order to guard Washington while McClellan marched on Richmond. On April 11, 1862, Secretary of War Stanton said to McDowell, "You will consider the National capital as especially under your protection, and make no movement throwing your force out of position for the discharge of this primary duty."² McDowell proceeded to the Rappahannock opposite Fredericksburg as his advanced defense position in front of Washington. Later Shields' Division was taken from Banks' army and sent to McDowell to take the place of Franklin's Division that had gone to join McClellan. Thus McDowell had about 34,000 men,³ not counting

¹ Alexander S. Webb, *The Peninsula* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1861), p. 31.

² John D. Imboden, in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (New York: The Century Co., 1897), II, p. 31. Also Allan Nevins, *Fremont, The West's Greatest Adventurer* (New York: Harper and Brothers Pub., 1923), II, p. 486, says that the number of McDowell's troops was 40,000.

Shields' Division, along the Rappahannock and other points east of the Blue Ridge, so that he could move on Fredericksburg, the Luray Valley and Staunton, Richmond, or protect Washington.

Banks, as head of the Shenandoah Department, had about 14,000 men,⁴ and was the man immediately facing Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley. He does not seem to have been the type of general to face such a skilled tactician and strategist as Jackson. John Codman Ropes describes Banks' military ability by saying that he "was a brave and even a pugnacious man. He wanted nothing better than to fight a battle. He knew little about the theory or practice of war, but he was always ready for a fight."⁵ This does not seem to be the true picture of Banks, as evidenced by his lack of desire to fight Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley. I believe that Fred Harvey Harrington in his biography of Banks gives a better picture of Banks' military ability when he says, "Time after time the Waltham General allowed himself to be delayed by imagined dangers and minor obstacles. He reported that his men were tired, that they were short on food and ammunition. The weather was unfavorable, a flank might be exposed, part of the command was not well supplied with shoes. Still, there was time for dress parade."⁶

The other department was the Mountain Department under General Fremont. This is the Department we are most interested in, as it is within this Department that the Battle of McDowell took place. This Department was the region west of the Shenandoah River. It included West Virginia, eastern Kentucky, and eastern Tennessee as far as Knoxville. It was mainly a region of mountain ranges. Large military operations going from west or east across the area were almost impossible. The area had a wilderness one hundred miles wide with only a few poor roads through it, and thus it would be extremely difficult to supply troops from bases on either side. Also, there was a great lack of forage in this region for mules that would be needed to haul supplies. In describing this area the Comte de Paris says, "This department was so curiously

⁴ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁵ John Codman Ropes, *The Story of the Civil War Campaign of 1862* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1895), p. 119.

⁶ Fred Harvey Harrington, *Fighting Politician, Major General N. P. Banks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1948), p. 87.

marked out that Fremont was unable to find an enemy within its prescribed limits."⁷

Fremont had been taken away from command of the Department of Missouri due to his incompetence there. The Mountain Department was created for Fremont by Lincoln "solely to placate the radical Republicans . . . and . . . was in view of the military and administrative incompetence shown in his egregious failure in Missouri, a choice blame-worthy in a high degree."⁸ Not only was Fremont found to be incompetent in Missouri, but it is believed by some that he proved to be the same way in the Mountain Department. We will see evidence of this later, but one illustration of the impracticalness of Fremont is given by Captain Hartwell Osburn when he describes the picture they got of Fremont when Schenck's Brigade, of which Osburn was a member, joined Fremont early in 1862. Osburn says they found Fremont to be "haughty and reserved, with a privacy secured by a retinue of aides-de-camp dazzling in gold lace, and, unfortunately, but few of them at all intimate with the American tongue."⁹ Osburn goes on to say that there were 92 officers credited to Fremont's headquarters, and 52 of them were part of his personal establishment. Many of them were experienced foreign soldiers but many were "soldiers of fortune greedy of personal gain, and vain to a degree."¹⁰ Thus one would say they were very out of place in the wilds of the western Virginia mountains. However, Fremont must not have been completely like many of these officers of his staff, because an account in the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* gives a more complimentary picture of the General when it says, "On the slope of a hill side, near the bottom land, is pitched the small round tent of the Commanding General. No waving standard or display mark the headquarters. In a little place hardly larger than a sentry-box, seated before a rough table, we found General Fremont, the noble-man, as simple and as unostentatious as his surroundings. He has been there only a few days, and it is singular to see the enthusiasm

* Louis Philippe Albert d'Orleans, Comte de Paris, *History of the Civil War in America* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Law and Seale, 1873-1883), I, p. 622.

* James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1899), IV, p. 11.

* Capt. Hartwell Osburn, *Trials and Triumphs, Records of the 33rd Ohio Volunteer Reg.* (Chicago: A. C. McClung and Co., 1904), p. 29.

of thousands of men who had never set eyes on him before."¹¹ This gives a different picture of him than that of Osburn, but I am inclined to believe that this report in the *Daily Intelligencer* is more of a piece of propaganda to the people at home to counteract the previous descriptions they may have gotten of the real Fremont, as described by Osburn.

Fremont took command of the Mountain Department, relieving General Rosecrans, on March 29, 1862. This Department was divided into four districts. The first was the Railroad District under General B. F. Kelley; the second was the Cumberland District under General R. C. Schenck; the third was the Cheat Mountain District under General Robert Milroy; the fourth was the Kanawha District under General J. D. Cox. The whole Department included 19,000 men.¹² Fremont said that he could maintain established communication lines and put down irregular rebel bands with this force, but because his men were so scattered he could not concentrate a large enough force for general operations against the Confederates.

Therefore, on April 1st, Secretary of War Stanton told Fremont that the division of Brigadier General Blenker was being taken from the Army of the Potomac and sent to him via Harpers Ferry. Blenker's Division included twelve regiments of infantry in three brigades, commanded respectively by Stahel, Bohlen, and Von Steinwehr. Also, there were four batteries of artillery and one regiment of cavalry, making a total of about 12,000 men.¹³ On March 7th, this division was headed for Ft. Monroe, but on March 10th, they were directed to go to Harpers Ferry and get further orders there. By April 12th, no report had been heard of them by Fremont. Therefore, Fremont requested that they change their route and come

¹¹ *Daily Intelligencer*, Wheeling, Virginia, May 24, 1862, p. 1.

¹² Osburn, *op. cit.*, p. 24; Nevins, *op. cit.*, p. 636, says the number was 15,000; Imboden in *Battles and Leaders*, *op. cit.*, p. 285, says the number was 30,000; Hopes, *op. cit.*, p. 117, says Fremont could put about 15,000 into action in the region of Franklin; Comte de Paris, *op. cit.*, p. 36, says that with Blenker's Division, Fremont would have about 13,000-14,000; and Fremont, himself, in his report in the *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885) Series I, Vol. XII, p. 5, says that he had about 19,000 men in his Department. I believe that when the number 15,000 is mentioned they are talking of the forces only around Franklin. When all the forces of the Department are included there were about 19,000-20,000.

¹³ Osburn, *Trials and Triumphs, Records of the 55th Ohio Volunteer Infantry*, p. 25; Fremont, report in *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, p. 1, says that there were about 9,000 men. This may be true as the original 12,000 could have diminished to 9,000 by the time they reached Petersburg.

to Moorefield instead of Harpers Ferry. Brigadier General Rosecrans was put in temporary command of the division and sent to bring it to Moorefield. He found the division and learned that the men had been very short of supplies and they delayed at Martinsburg in order to get some. The men needed shoes; and horses were needed to pull the batteries, etc. When they received their order to proceed to Fremont's Department, they abandoned all of their tents and garrison equipment. The War Department had sadly neglected these Germans. They had no shelter during the forty days of rain season. At Berry's Ferry, Bohlen's Brigade had lost fourteen officers and men when a defective ferry boat sank in the flooded waters. Thus Blenker's Division was in poor shape when it finally joined Fremont at Petersburg, Virginia, on May 11th. Fremont himself was short of supplies. He reports that at the beginning of April he had five batteries in the field without horses to pull them, and that the Sixth Ohio Cavalry had no horses. His request for supplies were only being partly answered.

Lincoln not only created the Mountain Department to give Fremont a command, but also to further a pet idea of his (Lincoln's). He wanted Fremont to march from western Virginia into Tennessee and take the railroad at Knoxville and thus relieve the pro-Unionist in that region. Fremont promised that he would do this, if he were given adequate forces. So Fremont set up a plan. His first base of operations would be at New Creek on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. General Kelley and a force would be left to guard this base and protect loyalists there from guerrillas. Then Fremont with Blenker's Division would proceed up the valley of the South Branch of the Potomac River and pick up Schenck's Brigade either at Moorefield or Franklin. Then this force would move up the valley and pick up Milroy's Brigade at Monterey. They would then go on and strike the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad near Salem while General Cox's army took Newbern, or first join Cox and then both together take the railroad. They would then change their base of supply to Gauley and get supplies via the Ohio and Kanawha Rivers. By taking this railroad (Virginia and Tennessee), they would destroy connections between Knoxville and the army of eastern Virginia. Fremont's united command would then advance along the railroad to-

wards Knoxville and then take position at Cumberland Gap. After taking Knoxville, Fremont would change his supply base to that region where he could get supplies over good level roads. President Lincoln and Secretary of War Stanton approved of this plan, except that they changed the end of it by having Fremont, after taking the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad between Newbern and Salem, move rapidly on Richmond by that railroad instead of going by Knoxville. Banks was to co-operate with Fremont in these operations, if he could. On May 3rd, Fremont began this movement by moving his staff to New Creek on the Baltimore and Ohio. On May 4th, he learned of the evacuation of Yorktown by the Confederates and he reasoned that the Confederates would now increase their forces in the west. Therefore, Fremont wanted to concentrate his forces as soon as he could, but the delay in the arrival of Blenker's Division was slowing him down. On May 5th, Fremont left New Creek with the Sixth Ohio, part of the Eighth Virginia, a company of Indiana cavalry, and some men that had just arrived from the advance of Blenker's Division. They arrived at Petersburg on May 7th, and were later joined by a small part of General Kelley's force that hadn't remained at New Creek, and the rest of Blenker's Division which arrived on the 11th. But the Battle of McDowell and the subsequent chase of Milroy and Schenck by Jackson to Franklin put an end to any immediate carrying out of Fremont's previous plan.

General Schenck's Brigade, which I earlier stated was occupying the Cumberland District, was composed of the Fifty-fifth Ohio Volunteer Infantry under Colonel John C. Lee, the Eighty-second Ohio Infantry under Colonel James Cantwell, the Fifth West Virginia Infantry under Colonel John L. Zeigler, the First Battalion of Connecticut Cavalry under Major Judson M. Lyon, and Company K of the First Ohio Artillery under Captain William L. DeBeck. The First Battalion of Connecticut Cavalry had four companies. It left West Meriden, Connecticut, for Wheeling, Virginia, on February 20, 1862, with 346 officers and men. On March 27th, it left Wheeling and marched to Moorefield where it joined General Schenck's command. This Connecticut Battalion was later known as the First Regiment Connecticut Cavalry. Its commander, Major Lyon, resigned his command on August 15, 1862, a few months after

the Battle of McDowell. Erastus Blakeslee was Lyon's adjutant. The Fifty-fifth Ohio Infantry had been in Grafton, Virginia (now West Virginia) in February, and then it moved to Green Spring, Virginia, on March 31st after which by slow marching via Romney, it joined Schenck's command at Moorefield on about April 15th. There is no record when the other regiments joined Schenck. (I am giving these details about Schenck's and later Milroy's command as they were both vitally involved in the battle about which this paper is written.) On April 29th, Schenck's Brigade left Moorefield marching through some very beautiful scenery for Petersburg, where they established Camp Zeigler. Then on May 3rd, they began the march to Franklin up the Valley of the South Branch of the Potomac between the ridges of the Allegheny Mountains. Company A of the Fifty-fifth Ohio preceded them under the command of Captain Gambee in order to construct a telegraph line from Moorefield to Franklin. The river at Petersburg was flooded, and the following incident is related concerning the crossing of this river. There was a ford at Petersburg formed by the spreading out of the rocky bed of the river. The ford was about a half mile wide and the water was swift there. Wagon teams were used to take the men across and they got two regiments across when a battery of artillery got in deep water and two men and eight horses were drowned. Colonel Lee of the Fifty-fifth Ohio came up and said, "Not another man of my command shall cross here."¹⁴ General Schenck asked him if he was going to disobey orders, and Lee replied that according to regulations a man or animal can't be forced to go through standing water more than 3'10" deep. The water here was deeper than this so Schenck told Lee to camp on a nearby hill until rafts could be built to ferry them across. Thus Lee's men didn't get their feet wet. The Brigade finally reached Franklin on May 5th and encamped nine miles further south on the 6th. Then they received word that Milroy had been pushed back to McDowell and needed aid.

As stated before, the Cheat Mountain District was occupied by General Milroy (nicknamed the "War Eagle") and his Brigade, composed of the Twenty-fifth Ohio Infantry under Lieutenant Colonel W. P. Richardson, Thirty-second Ohio under Lieutenant Colonel Ebenezer H. Swinney, the Seventy-third

¹⁴ *Gettysburg*, p. 41.

Ohio under Colonel Orland Smith, the Seventy-fifth Ohio under Colonel Nathaniel C. McLean, the Second West Virginia Infantry under Colonel John W. Moss, the Third West Virginia under Lieutenant Colonel Francis W. Thompson, Company I of the First Ohio Artillery under Captain Henry F. Hyman, the Twelfth Ohio Battery under Captain Aaron C. Johnson, and part of the First West Virginia Cavalry under Major John S. Krepps. Milroy's Brigade had been at Cheat Mountain and had fought the Battle of Camp Allegheny with the Confederate General Edward Johnson. After this, some of Milroy's command, including the Twenty-fifth Ohio, camped at Beverly for the winter (February-April). While there, the Twenty-fifth Ohio exchanged its smooth bore rifles for Vincennes rifles, carrying a two-ounce ball and sabre bayonets. But they were too heavy and were exchanged for Springfield rifles. On April 1st, the Twenty-fifth Ohio, with the rest of the Brigade, marched across Cheat and Allegheny Mountains to Monterey, arriving there on April 10th (Major George Webster was ahead of the Twenty-fifth at this time but soon afterwards was replaced by Colonel W. P. Richardson). Then Fremont ordered Milroy to take his command to McDowell and to the last ridges on the border of the Shenandoah Valley. Just before leaving Monterey, a large foraging party of Milroy's had been surprised by the Bath Confederate Cavalry under Lieutenant Byrd near Williamsville. Some of the men were killed and captured by the Confederates and also the Confederates got away with a Union supply train. Milroy sent several hundred men out to get back the loss while the rest of his command went to McDowell. The inhabitants of McDowell, hearing of the Union forces coming, chased most of their livestock into the hills to prevent their confiscation. Then Milroy arrived at McDowell. He ran into a great deal of trouble getting enough forage there. On April 30th, he sent Companies F and I of the Second Virginia (West Virginia) Regiment out to scout. They returned to camp on the 4th of May with a train of wagons of flour which was a big help to the Federals. Two regiments were sent to about 15 miles across the Shenandoah Mountain as outposts and foraging parties. Milroy now had 4,087 men¹³ on the Staunton and Parkersburg

¹³ *Inclusion, in Battles and Leaders, op. cit., p. 285.*

Turnpike at McDowell and vicinity, and Schenck was near Franklin with about 2,500 men.¹⁶

Thus Fremont's force was greatly divided and much of it inactive (although Fremont was slowly working to unite it and carry out his plan on the West Virginia and Tennessee Railroad). Instead of doing as they were, Fremont should have moved to aid Banks. Banks had been weakened by sending the Brigades of Abercrombie and Geary and others to guard the line of the Manassas Gap Railroad and also by sending Shields' Division to join McDowell on May 1st. Also due to the creation of the independent departments, this uniting of Fremont and Banks, if it had been done, would have caused a lot of trouble due to the rivalry of the commanders. This was the situation when the Battle of McDowell began. But before going into the battle, let us go back to the Shenandoah Valley and pick up Stonewall Jackson.

II

Jackson from Kernstown to Elk Run Valley and Organization

General Stonewall Jackson had just been defeated on March 23, 1862, at Kernstown, Virginia, by a force under Banks and Shields six times his size.¹⁷ After the Kernstown defeat, Jackson retreated up the Valley to Mount Jackson and encamped on a strong position on Rude's Hill about two and a half miles south of Mount Jackson. Mill Creek, which runs in front of it, was swollen as was also the North Fork of the Shenandoah, and thus protected his position. Still the hill was weakly fortified and there was little chance for reinforcements. Ashby's Cavalry, Captain Chew's Battery and others acted as a very effective rear guard all under the direction of Colonel Turner Ashby. Jackson says, "Although pursued by a greatly superior force, under General Banks, we were enabled to halt for more than a fortnight in the vicinity of Mount Jackson."¹⁸ This shows the effectiveness of Jackson's rear guard protection.

Banks had advanced to Woodstock with his main army and had outposts at Edenburg on the left of the turnpike. He had his magazine at Winchester which was connected with Harpers Ferry and Washington by a broken down railroad. There is a

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁷ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

¹⁸ *Official Records of the War of the Rebellion*, Series I, Vol. XII, p. 470.

range of mountains called the Massanuttons located between the two branches of the Shenandoah River. There is only one pass through them which runs from New Market in the valley of the North Fork to Luray in the valley of the South Fork. Jackson had been instructed to prevent Banks from sending troops to reinforce McClellan, but Jackson, himself, thought Banks wanted to take Staunton and connect with Fremont and then go to Richmond. Jackson could attack by way of the valley of the South Fork at Banks' communications, but on the other hand Banks with his 14,500 men and 40 pieces of artillery¹⁹ could occupy New Market and put Jackson on the defensive by forcing him to protect his own communications. Even though Banks was not this aggressive, Jackson did not want to take the chance this time, and hence continued to retreat up the Valley on the turnpike toward Harrisonburg. Jackson finally reached Harrisonburg on April 18th and halted for the night at Peales (six miles to the east). During this time, General Johnston had marched to the peninsula leaving 8,000 men under General Ewell on the Upper Rappahannock to co-operate with Jackson. On April 19th, Jackson went toward the Blue Ridge, crossing the Shenandoah River at Conrad's Store, going to the foot of Swift Run Gap and encamping in Elk Run Valley. By this time the Manassas Gap Railroad had been restored to Strasburg and Banks' supply line was safe. On April 17th, two days before Jackson moved to Swift Run Gap, some Federal cavalry seized New Market as Jackson's men fell back. Banks could then move across the Massanuttons and occupy Swift Run Gap, separating Jackson and Ewell. But Jackson, realizing this, made all haste and reached Elk Run Valley securing Swift Run Gap before Banks, if he had thought of it, could. Banks moved slowly down the turnpike. His skirmishers took two bridges over the South Fork at Luray on the 19th, and on the 22nd of April, his cavalry reached Harrisonburg. On the 26th, Banks sent five brigades to Harrisonburg and the remainder of his army stayed at New Market. Banks himself was in Harrisonburg with these five brigades which made up Williams' and Shields' Division and some cavalry. Jackson was resolved not to let Banks into Staunton. Jackson's position was protected. He had the Blue Ridge on either flank and his front was protected by the Shen-

¹⁹ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

andoah. He could communicate with Ewell and Richmond. As long as he held the bridge at Conrad's Store, he could threaten the flank of Banks' if he advanced on Staunton. Moreover if Banks attempted to attack Jackson and was defeated, he would be open to disaster in unfriendly land, far from his base of supplies at Harpers Ferry. However, Jackson was in a sort of bottle. If Banks should seize the bridge at Conrad's Store, he could cork Jackson up and move on Staunton, but General Banks was not enterprising enough to do this and Jackson figured Banks to be that way. Even one of Banks' own men complained about his lack of movement and that of the rest of the Union army in speaking of Banks waiting around at Woodstock while Jackson goes to Harrisonburg and Elk Run Valley. This soldier says, "The United States, with its vast resources, is playing this great game like a poor devil who is staking his last dime, and stands trembling lest he should lose his dinner. Why is McDowell with forty thousand men doing nothing on the Rappahannock? Why is Fremont, with thirty thousand, doing worse than nothing in Western Virginia? Why rest we here all the day idle?"²⁰ General McDowell was allowed to move to Fredericksburg, which was only 60 miles north of Richmond, after Jackson had been pushed up the Valley.

I am going to pause here at Elk Run Valley for a moment to give part of the organization of Jackson's army. Jackson had at this time a total force of about 19,000 men which included 8,000 at Swift Run Gap, 3,000 under General Edward Johnson near Milroy, and 8,000 under Ewell near Gordonsville.²¹ At this time the soldiers used muzzle-loading rifles with a range of about 250 yards and artillery with an effective range of about 2,000 yards. Companies had about thirty-five men in them and there were usually about ten companies to a battalion, with two or three more companies to a regiment, and usually about three or four brigades to a division. Jackson's Division had three infantry brigades. One was the First Brigade, or the Stonewall Brigade, under General W. C. S. Winder. The Second Brigade was under Colonel John A. Campbell, and the Third Brigade was under Brigadier General William B. Taliaferro. The Stonewall Brigade was composed of the Sec-

²⁰ "Personal Recollections of the War by a Virginian," *Harpers New Monthly Magazine*, XXXIII, (November 1866), p. 429.
²¹ *Ibid.*, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

and Virginia under Colonel James W. Allen, the Fourth Virginia under Colonel Charles A. Ronald, the Fifth Virginia under Colonel William H. Harmon later replaced by Colonel William H. S. Baylor, the Twenty-seventh Virginia under Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Jackson Grigsby, Thirty-third Virginia under Colonel Arthur C. Cummings who was replaced by Colonel John F. Neff at Elk Run Valley because he declined to be re-elected, the Rockbridge Battery under Captain William T. Poague, and Carpenter's Battery under Captain Joseph Carpenter. Winder's staff included Captain John F. O'Brien as Assistant Adjutant General, Lieutenant James M. Garnett as ordnance officer, Lieutenant McHenry Howard as aide-de-camp, Major G. Douglas Mercer as quartermaster, and Dr. Black of the Fourth Virginia as brigade surgeon. The Second Brigade was made up of the Twenty-first Virginia under Lieutenant Colonel R. H. Cunningham, the Forty-second Virginia under Major Henry Lane, the Forty-eighth Virginia under Major James C. Campbell, and the First Virginia Battalion under Captain B. W. Leigh. The Third Brigade was made up of the Twenty-third Virginia under Colonel A. G. Taliaferro, and the Thirty-seventh Virginia under Colonel Samuel V. Fulkerson (later the Tenth Virginia under Colonel S. B. Gibbons was added).

Under Jackson's command was the Army of the Northwest of which General Edward Johnson was the head. It was in the vicinity of West View on the western side of Staunton. Johnson was a West Point graduate and had been appointed Colonel of the Twelfth Georgia Regiment in June of 1861, and was promoted to Brigadier General in December of 1861, and took command of this Army of the Northwest. Lieutenant Colonel Z. T. Conner of the Twelfth Georgia became its colonel when Johnson was made brigadier general. The Army of the Northwest was made up of about 3,000 men and twelve guns. Its six regiments of infantry included the Twelfth Georgia under Major Willis A. Hawkins (Colonel Z. T. Conner had been made head of the First Brigade, of which the Twelfth Georgia was a part, by this time), the Twenty-fifth Virginia under Colonel George H. Smith, and the Thirty-first Virginia under Lieutenant Colonel Alfred H. Jackson. These three regiments were in the First Brigade. The Second Brigade, headed by Colonel W. C. Scott, included the Forty-fourth Vir-

ginia under Major Norvell Cobb, the Fifty-second Virginia under Colonel Michael G. Harman, and the Fifty-eighth Virginia under Lieutenant Colonel F. H. Board.

When Johnson took charge of this Confederate force, it was on the Greenbrier River. He took the force up to Allegheny Mountain at a pass on the turnpike, a mile west of the Highland County border. He did this because transportation to the Greenbrier area was too difficult. He now went into winter quarters at what was called Camp Allegheny. General Milroy learned from Confederate deserters the whereabouts of Camp Allegheny and at daybreak of December 13, he moved on Johnson with two columns of 900 men each. But Milroy was driven back after an eight-hour battle, mainly because his two columns didn't strike Johnson at the same time. Johnson got a note of thanks from the Confederate Congress for his success and also acquired the nickname of "Allegheny" Johnson. Later, when Fremont began his general advance, Johnson fell back from Camp Allegheny along the road to the crest of Shenandoah Mountain. By April 20th, he was threatened in the rear by Banks' advance, in the flank by the Brigade of Fremont's at Moorefield, and in front by Milroy's Brigade that had advanced from Monterey to McDowell. Johnson went over into the Valley to talk with Jackson. Johnson's second in command, feeling his position to be dangerous, retreated to West View (about seven miles west of Staunton). This created a panic in Staunton and many of the sick there were sent to Gordonsville. The Army of the Northwest now underwent some reorganization at West View.

Now back to Jackson at Swift Run Gap. When he arrived there, Jackson ordered that all the wagons containing tents and extra baggage be sent to the rear. One of Jackson's men describing the reaction to this order said, "This was a hard blow to us, since we had gotten in the habit of smuggling many articles into our tents to avoid carrying them, and when our tents left, they had dress coats, underclothing, etc., in them. 'Old Jack' flanked us that time."²¹ They had a snow storm while there but it wasn't too cold. A reorganization of the army took place while encamped at Swift Run Gap. Now

²¹ John J. Mearns, *One of Jackson's Foot Cavalry* (New York: The Neale Publishing Co., 1892), pp. 14-15.

Jackson had the problem of deciding his next move. It was obvious that he was in a crucial position.

General Imboden described the importance of Jackson's position in very vivid terms when he said, "... McClellan was right in his (Johnston's) front with superior numbers, and menacing the capital of the Confederacy with almost immediate and certain capture. Its only salvation depended upon Jackson's ability to hold back Fremont, Banks, and McDowell long enough to let Johnston try doubtful conclusions with McClellan. If he failed in this, these three commanders of an aggregate force then reputed to be, and I believe in fact, over one hundred thousand would converge and move down upon Richmond from the West as McClellan advanced from the East and the city and its defenders would fall an easy prey to nearly, if not quite, a quarter of a million of the best-armed and best-equipped men ever put into the field by any government."²³ Then Lee took over the command of all Confederate forces in Virginia, and Lee and Jackson began a series of communications concerning what Jackson's next move should be. Johnston had told Jackson to remain at Swift Run Gap close to the railroad so that he could get to Richmond in a hurry and to remain in a defensive attitude unless Banks advanced eastward. Then in that case Jackson could join Ewell and meet Banks in the passes of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Then Lee came in, telling Jackson if he could use Ewell's Division in an attack on Banks and thus relieve the pressure on Fredericksburg caused by McDowell, it would be fine. Jackson agreed with this command of Lee's saying that he wanted to get in the rear of Banks at New Market or Harrisonburg. He could do this, if Banks advanced to Staunton. Jackson would direct Ewell to go to Standardsville so as to be able to aid him (Jackson) if he needed Ewell. If Banks wouldn't move, then Jackson would attack part of Banks' force and maybe move forward as he doubts if Banks would follow him to the Blue Ridge like Johnston had said.

Then on April 25th, General Lee learned of the Federals attempting to strengthen their position at Fredericksburg which would mean weakening other points, and thus it would be a good time for Jackson to move. Therefore, Lee told Jackson

²³ *Battle and Leaders*, op. cit., p. 202.

that he and Ewell could move on Warrenton, where there was a Federal force, if he thought Banks was still too strong in numbers and position. Or Ewell and Fields, near Rappahannock, could attack McDowell at Fredericksburg. "The blow," he added, "wherever struck, must to be successful, be sudden and heavy. The troops must be efficient and light."²⁴ The next day, Banks had moved most of his army to Harrisonburg and Ewell had been called to Standardsville. On the 28th, Jackson told Lee that he thought that Banks' main army was at Harrisonburg and only a brigade was left at New Market to guard his rear. Jackson then went on to say, if he could get 5,000 more men he could attack Banks' front. This was the opportunity to strike. But Lee said he couldn't give him any more men, so on the 29th Jackson proposed three different plans. One was to leave Ewell at Swift Run Gap to threaten Banks' rear if he should move on Staunton, and Jackson would move his men on the Federal force in front of Edward Johnson. The second plan was to co-operate with Ewell and attack the Federals' detached force between New Market and the Shenandoah and if this were successful, then he would move on Banks' rear at New Market and cause Banks to fall back. The third plan was to pass down along the Shenandoah and to the right of it, and threaten Winchester from Front Royal.

Lee left the choice up to Jackson. He chose the first plan of attacking the Union force west of Staunton (Milroy). Then he would only have Banks to fight and would also have Johnson reinforcing him. Thus maybe he could beat Banks and thereby Jackson would be free to cross the Blue Ridge to Warrenton, Fredericksburg, etc. Jackson believed Banks to have a force of 21,000 men which exceeded the combined strength of Jackson, Ewell, and Johnson. Therefore, he was going to first crush the weaker and more exposed part of the enemy and then having cleared his own rear and prevented a combination between Banks and Fremont, he could strike the larger force of Banks with more chance of success. Now the next problem was how to march from Elk Run Valley to Staunton without Banks knowing it. (If Banks knew of Jackson's march, he would realize his own rear was safe and could

²⁴ Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

follow Jackson to Staunton and thus bottle him up between Milroy and himself.) Therefore, Jackson decided to have Ewell occupy his camp at Elk Run Valley while Jackson marched secretly by a round-about way to Staunton.

Before following Jackson on his march to Staunton, let us once more look at the position of the various Federal forces and the general progress of the war. Banks' force was at Harrisonburg, Milroy was at McDowell, and Fremont was waiting at Petersburg for Blenker's Division. Cox was in the Kanawha District and was moving toward Lewisburg and Peters-town in order to be able to meet Fremont's general advance to the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. McDowell was at Fredericksburg. That was the position of the immediate Union forces near Jackson. On April 30th, when Jackson left Swift Run Gap, Richmond was still safe. McClellan had ordered a siege train to be sent from Washington to Yorktown. Johnston was preparing to retreat as he was in danger of being caught between McClellan and McDowell. There were only 12,000 Confederates to oppose McDowell's 35,000-40,000 on the Rappahannock. As soon as Jackson left the Valley, Stanton ordered McDowell to remain where he was and ordered Banks to retreat back to Strasburg.

III

Elk Run Valley to McDowell

Previously, Jackson had ordered Ewell, who was on the east side of the Blue Ridge Mountains, to get ready to come to the west side and join the Army of the Valley. Ewell had moved toward Jackson and camped near Standardsville, just on the other side of the Blue Ridge. On April 29th, Ashby and his cavalry went out and made a demonstration in force on Banks at Harrisonburg. On April 30th, they drove the Federal cavalry back to their own camps and that afternoon Jackson left Elk Run Valley after ordering Ewell to join him. Ewell came in right after Jackson's departure and found that Jackson was no longer at Elk Run Valley. This was a surprise to Ewell as Jackson had not informed him of his future plans (Jackson never confided his plans to his subordinates). But Ewell set up camp at Elk Run Valley as he had been ordered to do.

Jackson first headed toward Port Republic, marching along on the eastern side of the Shenandoah River. It took him two and a half days to march sixteen miles as the road was extremely muddy. It rained all day on May 1st and everything sunk in the mud and quicksand. Everyone had to help push the wagons, etc. Even Jackson got off his horse and helped carry stones and logs to help move the guns and wagons. Many of Jackson's officers thought this march to be "inexcusable rashness, without justifiable emergency."²⁵ Henry Kyd Douglas goes on to say that they could have crossed the Blue Ridge through Swift Run Gap by a more solid road to Standardsville and Gordonsville and then to Staunton just as quickly and as secretly. However, I believe the way that Jackson went confused his enemy more than if he had gone the way Douglas suggested. Just before they reached Port Republic, they changed their route and went toward the Blue Ridge and camped at the foot of Brown's Gap. Colonel T. H. Williamson came from Staunton to guide Jackson over the Blue Ridge as Williamson was one of the best engineers of that area and knew much about the passes through the Blue Ridge. The next day, May 3rd, was a clear day and Jackson's army left the Valley over a stony road through Brown's Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Jackson had told only his adjutant of his plans so all of his men thought they were headed for Richmond, and many were disappointed at having to leave the Valley which was the homeland of many of them. Even Banks was fooled. He was completely ignorant of Jackson's movement toward Staunton. On April 28th, he had telegraphed Washington saying he was "entirely secure." A few days later, he believed that Jackson was on his way to Richmond and that there was nothing for him (Banks) to do in the Valley. Then reports came in that Jackson was not at Richmond, and so Banks didn't know where Jackson was. He thought maybe he was marching on Harrisonburg, so on May 5th, Banks withdrew his forces to New Market.

At this time the way to Staunton looked clear to Milroy's forces. Banks was at Harrisonburg and there was nothing between him and Milroy. They could unite and force Johnson at Buffalo Gap, near West View, to withdraw or even get be-

²⁵ Henry Kyd Douglas, *I Rode with Stonewall* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), p. 41.

tween Johnson and Jackson. But Banks made no attempt to move, except a few days later to withdraw to New Market, and on May 1st, Fremont ordered Milroy to remain at McDowell.

After crossing through Brown's Gap, Jackson's force camped for the night of May 3rd at White Hall. Jackson spent the night at the home of a family named Pace. The next day was Sunday and Jackson planned to rest there for the day as he was extremely religious and didn't believe in fighting or marching on Sunday, unless it was very necessary. But a report came in that the Federals were marching on Staunton (a false report) and so it became necessary for Jackson to move to Staunton on Sunday. He sent his troops to Mechum's River Station and moved them by railroad to Staunton and the wagons and artillery by road. This is said to be the first big troop movement in history to go by railroad. As soon as he reached Staunton, Jackson placed pickets on the roads to Harrisonburg, allowing no one to pass. In this way he hoped to keep his movements to Staunton secret.

These relatively rapid movements of Jackson's soldiers in crossing the Blue Ridge Mountains twice in just a few days, and later other movements in marching to McDowell and then back to the Valley, earned for Jackson's men the name of the "foot-cavalry."

At Staunton, Jackson was joined by the Tenth Virginia Regiment under Colonel Gibbons and a Corps of Virginia Military Institute Cadets. While in Swift Run Gap, Jackson wrote the following letter to the Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute:

Swift Run Gap, April 30, 1862

Maj-Gen. F. H. Smith,
Superintendent Virginia Military Institute.

General—Please march the cadets at once to Staunton, if you feel authorized to cooperate in an important movement which I will explain to you when we meet. As many of the cadets' parents may have sent their sons to the Institute for the purpose of keeping them out of the field at present, I can provide for all such cases, and even for the entire corps, if necessary, by assigning to them the care of the provisions, and the baggage train; and thus let volunteers go into battle who would be otherwise kept out. The duty I know would not be congenial to the feelings of our

brave corps, which I am well satisfied would desire the advance; but the patriot, and I regard each one of them as such, is willing to take any position where he can best serve his country. Should you cooperate with me, you will be absent from the Institute for a few days, but I trust that an ever-kind Providence will afterwards permit the Institute uninterruptedly to press forward in its great mission.

Please let me hear from you at once. Send your dispatch to the care of Maj. A. W. Harman, Staunton.

I am, General,

Your obedient servant,
T. J. Jackson
Major-General²⁶

General Smith sent back his reply right away, and the next morning he gave the following order to the cadets:

General Orders
No. 46

Headquarters, Virginia Military Institute
May 1st, 1862

I. The enemy are hovering upon our borders, and are threatening to drive us from our home. The army of Gen. T. J. Jackson's is preparing to meet and repel their invasion of our Valley, and in the crucial emergency pressing upon him I have tendered to General Jackson the cooperation of the Corps of Cadets. Gen. Jackson has accepted their services, and calls upon me to march to Staunton this morning.

The Corps of Cadets under command of Major S. Ship will be in marching condition as soon as practicable, and proceed forthwith to Staunton. I want no cadet to accompany the command except those who feel that they go with the consent of their parents, either presumed or actual. I have no time to consult all, but have to presume upon the patriotic impulse of parents whose wishes would be to defend the home now so seriously threatened. Let us go into this service, which will be but for a few days with the ardor and devotion of true sons of the South, resolved to maintain the independence of our beloved country.

II. Major Ship will detail a guard to take charge of the public property. Col. Wm. Gilham and Lt. H. A. Wise will remain in charge of the Institution, the command devolving upon Col. Gilham. By command of

Gen. Smith.²⁷

General Smith then left for Staunton on May 1st with four companies of cadets under the command of Major Ship. There were 200 cadets in all. The disabled and those whose parents

²⁶ Col. William Cropper, One Hundred Years of V.M.I. (Richmond: Garrett and Son, 1902), p. 120.

objected were left behind as a guard of the Institute. Only eleven cadets remained behind to do this. The rest set out in the rain for the march to Staunton equipped only with their blankets, etc., plus a small smooth bore drill gunpiece that was ill-suited for war. They reached Staunton on May 4th, and rested there for the night. On hearing that the cadets had gone to Staunton, the Virginia Military Institute Board of Visitors, which was meeting at the time in Richmond, wrote Adjutant General Richardson and said that they disapproved of sending the cadets to battle with Jackson. They went on to say that the cadets should only be exposed to battle if it were in defense of Virginia Military Institute, and this was not the case here. General Smith wrote Richardson saying that he would accept the Board's resolution and not co-operate with Jackson; Richardson sent a telegram back to Smith saying that it was too late to send the cadets back and that "the mischief is done and we shall have to let it alone."²⁸ May 6th was spent in rest by all of Jackson's men, and Jackson reviewed the Corps of Cadets on the grounds of the Deaf and Dumb Asylum in Staunton. The Cadets were then instructed to join the Stonewall Brigade which was then camped about two miles east of Staunton. Jackson slept at the Virginia House in Staunton the nights of the 5th and 6th.

On the night of the 6th of May, General Johnson's army began a rapid march toward McDowell. They were preceded by a group of cavalry which was charged with responsibility to arrest anyone it met, so as to preserve the secrecy of the movement as long as possible. On May 7th, the Second Brigade of Jackson's army followed Johnson's command and Jackson's Third Brigade followed the second. At 2 A. M. on the 8th, the Corps of Cadets and the First Brigade, or Stonewall Brigade, began the march to McDowell. Thus the Cadets and the Stonewall Brigade left much later than the rest and they marched thirty-four miles on the day of the 8th, reaching the outskirts of McDowell by about midnight (after the battle was over). After marching about twenty miles, these last two mentioned groups were ordered to drop their knapsacks and march the rest of the way to McDowell as fast as they could, but still they didn't get there in time to help in the battle.

Fremont had withdrawn his order to Milroy of the 1st, telling him to remain at McDowell so Milroy sent the Thirty-second and Seventy-fifth Ohio Regiments, the Third West Virginia, and some cavalry out as an advance across the Shenandoah Mountain to about eighteen miles west of Staunton. The Thirty-second Ohio had just received some new Sibley tents and they were very proud of them. On May 5th, Milroy sent them out beyond the Shenandoah Mountain. They rested for the night on the eastern side of the Mountain and then returned to the summit on the morning of the 6th, and then later in the day, descended the eastern side of the Mountain again and put up their new tents for the night. On the morning of the 7th, their tents were neatly packed for the wagon, which had returned to McDowell for rations the night before, to pick them up. At this time, General Edward Johnson came upon the Federal cavalry pickets of Captain Shuman's First West Virginia Company and drove them back upon the Thirty-second Ohio, while they were eating their breakfast of hardtack and coffee. One of the Union "cavalrymen, bare headed and dusty, with sabre in hand, dashed through the camp (of the Thirty-second Ohio) at the utmost speed of his horse, shouting as he flew by, 'The rebels are coming!'"²⁹ The Thirty-second Ohio then prepared for advance or retreat. A couple of companies were sent ahead to find what kind of a force was advancing on them. Since the pickets in front hadn't reported, they thought that maybe the cavalryman had been scared by some bushwhackers and that really there was no big Confederate force out there. (Later they discovered that the pickets were cut off and had escaped via the mountains.) However, this idea was soon quelled when they saw a long line of Confederate infantry (Johnson's) marching toward them. Therefore, the Thirty-second Ohio began an orderly retreat to the summit of the Mountain. Both General Johnson's men and the Thirty-second Ohio were heading for this summit. If the Ohio Infantry Regiment reached the summit first, they were safe, but if they didn't, they would be cut off. The Thirty-second Ohio got there first as they had the incentive of keeping from being captured and also had the better road to travel. But they had to leave their new Sibley tents and other equip-

²⁹ E. E. Hale, *History of the Thirty-second Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry* (Columbus: Carl and Evans Publishers, 1899), p. 22.

ment including Sid Stocking's sutler stores behind. Johnson's men took over this abandoned equipment, burning part of it. General Milroy, hearing of this Confederate advance, sent the Seventy-third Ohio Regiment and Captain Hyman's Ninth Ohio Battery out to stop the Confederate advance. Milroy went out with them and they met the retreating Thirty-second and Seventy-fifth Ohio Regiments at the western foothills of Shenandoah Mountain. Milroy sent Hyman's Battery to Shaw's Ridge and it began to fire on the Confederates and drove Johnson and his men back onto the eastern side of the Mountain. Milroy then heard that Johnson was making another attempt to reach his (Milroy's) rear by going around to the right, so he sent Company B of the Thirty-second Ohio out to find if this were true and he told them, "If you find them, pitch into them; give them hell. Make them think they are flanked."³⁰ Then Milroy, finding that this right flank movement of the Confederates was taking place, decided to withdraw all of his forces back to McDowell, which he did. Johnson then marched to the western base of the Shenandoah Mountain and camped for the night. Milroy describes this action of May 7th in his official report by saying, "May 7th, I was advised by my scouts and spies that a junction had been effective between the armies of Generals (Stonewall) Jackson and (Edward) Johnson, and that they were advancing to attack me at McDowell. Having the day previous ³¹ sent out a large portion of the Third West Virginia and the Thirty-second and Seventy-fifth Ohio Regiments to Shaw's Ridge and upon Shenandoah Mountain for the purpose of protecting my foraging and reconnoitering parties, I immediately ordered my whole command to concentrate at McDowell, and expecting reinforcements, prepared for defense there. . . ." ³² This withdrawal to McDowell was a bitter blow to Milroy's men as they were all set for a victorious march to Staunton. Instead, they returned to McDowell awaiting battle and hoping that reinforcements would arrive in time from General Schenck in Franklin or General Fremont near Petersburg. A correspondent for the *Cincinnati Commercial* gives a good picture of the attitude of the Union forces of Milroy as they waited that night

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

³¹ This would be the 4th and therefore Milroy made a mistake in his report. The previous mention of the Thirty-second Ohio puts the date of their going out as the 5th and this is incorrect.

³² R. B. Milroy, report in *Beutler and Leachery*, op. cit., p. 286.

of May 7th for the inevitable Confederate attack. This correspondent says, "The men slept on their arms, while the officers made the arrangements for the next day's battle. A little after midnight, most of us tried to sleep. I confess that the affair looked too blue to permit of my sleeping. We had information that Jackson was coming with 9,000 men by way of North River Gap, to attack our left, while Johnson with his whole force and part of Jackson's would attack us in front. Our force was not half theirs, and our position a poor one; but General Milroy said he would not yield a foot to treason, and so we must fight."³³

IV

The Battle

Early in the morning, Johnson and his men with Jackson set out from the west side of Shenandoah Mountain for the Federal position at McDowell. The Union forces of Milroy had all withdrawn into this town of McDowell which was really almost too small to be called a town. As one approached this town by the Parkersburg-Staunton Turnpike from Staunton, one came upon a small river called the Bull Pasture River. This river was flooded at the time and thus the only way to cross it was by a narrow bridge. On the other side of this bridge there was a Presbyterian church on the left side of the road. A few yards farther up the road was the main part of the town which included a store, a log schoolhouse, a sawmill, a blacksmith shop, and a few houses, amongst which were the brick houses of Felix K. and George W. Hull. The only connection the inhabitants of this town had with the outside world was a stagecoach that passed through the town every other day.

Now this town presented a very difficult position for Jackson to attack. He could not very well go by the road through the narrow pass (about one-half mile wide) to the bridge and cross into the town, as it would be too easy for Milroy to protect this pass by guns on the mountains on either side of the pass, or by covering the bridge with guns on a small hill about 500 yards beyond the bridge. About a mile and a half east of McDowell, off to the left of the turnpike, was a rather high

³³ Frank Moore, *The Battle of McDowell* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1903), V. Documents, p. 20. (From an account in the *Chambersburg Commercial*).

elevation called Sitlington's Hill. Its top was broad but was rugged and had many sharp ridges and ravines on its surface. In front of it, a smooth slope dropped down sharply to the Bull Pasture River, about 500 feet below. This land here was owned by a Confederate sympathizer in the town of McDowell by name of Sitlington. Off to the right of the turnpike was an elevation, not quite as high as Sitlington's Hill, that was owned by the two Hulls, previously mentioned, and they used it to graze their cattle. Beyond the town of McDowell rose the towering Allegheny Mountains, and the turnpike continued to run through the narrow passes in these mountains to Monterey and on to Parkersburg on the Ohio River.

In McDowell, all of Milroy's men were up by 2:30 on Thursday morning, May the 8th. They had all eaten breakfast by 4 A. M. and waited for the attack by the Confederates, but no attack came. They thought that the Confederates were waiting for Jackson's advance from North River Gap which they believed to be taking place. General Milroy sent a squad of cavalry in that direction to find Jackson's force. They went about fifteen miles from McDowell and found nothing.

Meanwhile General Jackson and General Johnson with about thirty men, including Lieutenant Colonel Abner Smead, Johnson's assistant adjutant general, and Colonel W. H. Harmon, Johnson's aide-de-camp, left the turnpike and went up a hollow to the top of Sitlington's Hill to observe the enemy. They saw that the main force of Milroy's infantry was in the Valley at McDowell. Also there was a battery on a small hill in the town.

The hill where Johnson and Jackson were (Sitlington's Hill) was a ridge that ran North and South, and at right angles to the turnpike. It had a depression in it a little to the northern side of the center of the ridge. At the extreme northern end of the ridge, beyond another small depression, was a small wooded knoll. This ridge does not go straight north and south but is a ridge of three different hills (the before mentioned two depressions separating them) forming an obtuse angle. From the apex of this angle another ridge runs northwest towards the turnpike, and a less prominent ridge runs southwest to a ravine that goes down to the Bull Pasture River. It is a fairly steep climb coming from the west up to the obtuse

angled Sitlington's Ridge, especially on its center and southern end. There is a deep depression between the northwest running and the southwest running ridges, mentioned above. Thus you have a picture somewhat like two angles coming together at their apexes. This hill is constantly running down hill from the obtuse angled ridge down to its apex and then further down along the arms of the lower angle. Behind the upper ridge there is a big sinkhole and then woods behind that.

General Milroy then saw the small group of Confederates on Sitlington's Hill. He sent out three companies of the Seventy-third Ohio under Major Long, and Company B of the Second West Virginia Regiment under Captain Latham to skirmish with this group of Confederates on Sitlington's Hill and to learn more of their strength. When this party of skirmishers was discovered, Johnson ordered the Fifty-second Virginia up from the road below, and they soon arrived and repelled the Federal skirmishers and then the Fifty-second Virginia took position on the left of Sitlington's Ridge. Also at this time, a section of Captain Henry Hyman's Twelfth Ohio Battery began firing shells from the small hill in McDowell, one and one-half miles away. But because of their lower elevation and distance, their firing did no damage or harm to the Confederates on the hill. This firing of Hyman's Battery, plus some sporadic skirmishing of the above mentioned parts of the Seventy-third Ohio and Second West Virginia with the Fifty-second Virginia, was about all the action that took place all morning and during the early part of the afternoon.

Sometime after the Fifty-second Virginia had gone up the hill and repulsed the initial skirmishers, some more of Johnson's army came up to secure Sitlington's Hill. The Fifty-second was already on the left of Sitlington's Ridge. The Twelfth Georgia was sent out front on to the lower angle, previously mentioned. The Fifty-eighth Virginia was placed on the left to support the Fifty-second Virginia, and the Forty-fourth Virginia was placed to the right of the Fifty-second and Fifty-eighth near and in the depression that separates the center hill from the southern hill of the oblique angled ridge. To prevent the Federals from coming up the turnpike and taking the point where the Confederates turned off to go up the ravine to the top of the mountain, the Thirty-first Virginia

Regiment was placed between this point of the turnpike and the town.

When Milroy had learned of Jackson and Johnson's approach to McDowell on the 7th, he wired to Fremont for help. Fremont ordered General Schenck, who was near Franklin (25 miles from McDowell), to march at once to Milroy's aid. When Schenck received this order, three companies of the Fifty-fifth Ohio (which, as previously mentioned, was part of his Brigade) were on a scouting detail and couldn't be reached in time. Therefore, Schenck proceeded from Franklin with the rest of his Brigade on a forced march to McDowell. They had to cross some streams that were flooded and therefore were swift and deep. To cross them, Schenck had the cavalry and battery cross first, and then the wagons were brought into the stream to act as a bridge for the infantry. In this way Schenck was able to march his command over the twenty-five miles in twenty-four hours which, though often done by Jackson's men, was very unusual for the Union forces in that or almost any other area at that time. The *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer* gives the following account of Schenck's march.

An extract from a private letter written from Franklin, Virginia, to a friend in Cincinnati says:

'General Fremont pronounces this one of the most brilliant and successful achievements of the war. With a mere handful of men, not over 1,800, all total, with bridges burned and boats destroyed, without adequate transportation, and no forage but what could be gathered on the way, he (Schenck) marched seventeen miles [the distance was about twenty-five miles] to the relief of Milroy, who, with only 4,500 men was about being defeated by Johnson and Jackson with an army of 14,000. General Schenck arrived in time, and by making a furious attack upon the approaching column of the enemy, so startled and stunned them, that he was able to fall back in the night, and fetch off Milroy and his men. Schenck only needs the accidental accuracy of a rebel bullet to make him a Major-General or immortal.'²⁴

When Schenck arrived at McDowell it was 10 o'clock in the morning of the 8th, and the skirmishers had already been out for some time, as had Hyman's Battery been firing. Schenck was senior in rank and after finding out what the situation was, he took over the command from Milroy.

²⁴ *Daily Intelligencer*, Wheeling, Virginia, May 22, 1862, p. 2.

Meanwhile Jackson and Johnson were discussing what should be done. He could bring artillery up to Sitlington's Hill and have perfect command of the valley below, and the firing of this artillery would force the Federals to withdraw, but they might get away unharmed and Jackson did not want this to happen. The hill was too rugged and forested to try a frontal attack down it on McDowell and then they would have the flooded river to contend with. If he tried to go by the turnpike, he would run into the deadly fire of Hyman's Battery on the little hill in McDowell which commanded the bridge, and Jackson wanted to save his men for the impending fight against Banks in the near future. Therefore, Jackson decided to wait until the next day to fight. This way he would have time to send his staff out to explore the mountains for a trail that would lead them around to the Federal rear, and thus trap the Union forces in the little town of McDowell. Jackson hoped that Milroy had not heard of his joining with Johnson and thus would underestimate his (Jackson's) force. If Milroy should underestimate Jackson's force, Jackson reasoned that Milroy probably would not attempt to withdraw from the town. Therefore, as it became later in the day, Jackson sent some men out to find a path to the enemy's rear, and then dismissed the rest of his staff which included Dr. Hunter McGuire, the medical director; First Lieutenant A. S. Pendleton, aide-de-camp; First Lieutenant J. K. Boswell, chief engineer; Second Lieutenant R. K. Meade, assistant chief of ordnance; Major J. A. Harman, chief quartermaster; Major W. J. Hawks, chief commissary; Colonel Crutchfield, chief of artillery; and Colonel T. H. Williamson of the engineers. Jackson dismissed all of this staff except two, telling them to rest after they had fulfilled their various duties. Before they left, one of the artillery officers offered to bring up a battery to return the fire of Hyman's Battery. Jackson "quietly replied: 'Thank you not yet,' and at length added to one of them (artillery officers): 'Perhaps Providence may open a way toward Monterey for you tomorrow.'"²⁶ Later in the afternoon, an officer reported to Jackson that they had found a rough mountain trail through the mountains in the northwest crossing the Bull Pasture River and coming out on the road between McDowell and Franklin.

²⁶ B. L. Shriver, *Life and Campaigns of Lieutenant General Thomas J. Jackson* (New York: Blacklock and Co., 1882), p. 224.

Jackson then issued an order to move strong detachments of artillery and infantry by this trail during the night, but this was interrupted and the order countermanded when the Federal attack came.

At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Captain George R. Latham of the Second West Virginia Volunteer Infantry, who had been out skirmishing, reported to Milroy saying that he had discovered that the enemy were trying to establish a battery on Sitlington's Hill that would command the whole Union encampment. (The Confederates were not trying to do this. Latham had been misled in his observations.) Milroy then discussed the situation with Schenck. There was no forage in McDowell and Schenck reports that, "If our horses starve a day longer, they will not be able to draw away the train or carry us off."³⁶ Also they realized that they would not be getting any more reinforcements as Schenck reports: "On the 8th of May, Fremont was at Petersburg on his march from Lost Creek to Franklin, and certainly nowhere within less than 50 or 60 miles of McDowell. That was poor supporting distance."³⁷ Therefore, they decided to have Milroy make a reconnaissance in force upon the Confederates on the hill, so as to catch Jackson off guard and give them (Federals) a chance to retreat safely that night to Franklin. Schenck reports of his decision by saying, "General Milroy, always moved by undaunted and impetuous, though rather uncalculating, bravery, would have remained to challenge and await attack. But after conference, it was agreed that the better plan would be to send, that evening, whatever portion of our united force was available for the attack up the side of the mountain to assault the enemy and deliver a blow, if we could, and then retire from his front before he had recovered from the surprise of such a movement. I gave the order accordingly. No officer could have carried it out more effectively than did General Milroy."³⁸

Milroy then opened the attack with a heavy artillery fire that was ineffective, and then sent the Seventy-fifth Ohio under Major Robert Reilly and the Twenty-fifth Ohio under Lieutenant Colonel W. P. Richardson to attack the enemy. Colonel N. C. McLean of the Seventy-fifth Ohio was to be in command

³⁶ *Official Records*, op. cit., p. 26.

³⁷ *R. C. Schenck, report in Battles and Leaders*, op. cit., p. 200.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

of both regiments. Therefore, at about 4:30 in the afternoon, McLean marched forward with seven companies of the Seventy-fifth and nine companies of the Twenty-fifth Ohio, crossed the river on the bridge, followed the road a few hundred yards and then McLean ordered Richardson to send two companies in advance to find better what the Confederate position and strength were. Right after these two companies went out, McLean ordered Richardson to support them with the rest of his regiment in formation of line of battle. Richardson carried this order out very quickly, and soon the entire Twenty-fifth Ohio was marching up the front of the mountain. As soon as the Twenty-fifth Ohio was far enough ahead to make room in the open ground for movement, Colonel McLean got the Seventy-fifth Ohio in line of battle and ordered them to advance in easy supporting distance of the Twenty-fifth Ohio. Their total force (both Twenty-fifth and Seventy-fifth) was about 1,000 men. Soon after the two companies of skirmishers got started up the hill, Johnson's men opened with a deadly fire upon McLean's men. E. R. Monfort poetically describes this first Confederate firing thusly, "Suddenly the whole mountain seemed ablaze with the flashes of rebel guns that thundered and vomited forth showers of leaden hail. The rocks, and crags, and trees seemed clothed in the wild sublimity of the glory of a natural storm as when mountain tops salute each other with heaven's artillery."³⁹

This fire was so destructive that McLean had to bring quickly forward all the forces under his command. The Federal forces were relatively unprotected as they advanced up the mountain slope which had few boulders or trees or ridges to protect them. But though the Confederates had more protection, they were outlined against the eastern sky while the Federals were partly hidden by shadows of the sunset. Also the climb was a very steep one and the men often had to march from one side to another to get up the hill. On the other hand, Johnson's men were fairly well protected behind the crests of the upper part of the mountain. McLean reports of his men's progress up the mountain by saying, "Under the most heavy and galling fire from a well sheltered enemy, and without protection them-

³⁹ E. R. Monfort, "From Gettysburg to McDowell through Tygart's Valley," *Sketches of War History 1861-62* (Chambersburg: Robert Clarke and Co., 1898), p. 13.

selves, they steadily advanced up the precipitous ascent, firing and loading with great coolness. . . ."40

As they came closer to the Confederate advances on the lower crests of the mountain, they became engaged in bayonet hand-to-hand fighting and drove Johnson's advance back to the upper oblique-angled ridge. All along here the hill is circular and therefore the flanks of the lines engaged were often out of sight of each other. The Twelfth Georgia which had been way out front with the Confederate skirmishers did not completely withdraw with the rest to the other side of the upper ridge or crest. Their commander yelled at them to retire to the other side of the ridge where the other regiments found protection without sacrificing the efficiency of their fire. But the noise of the battle prevented these Georgia men from hearing their commander, and he went along their ranks and persuaded one wing of the regiment to withdraw and then when he was gone to get the other wing, the first wing rushed forward again. A Georgia youth expressed the spirit of his comrades the next day after the battle in answer to a question as to why they didn't go behind the shelter of the ridge, behind which they could fight just as well, by saying, "We did not come all this way to Virginia to run before the Yankees."⁴¹ They (the Twelfth Georgia) had a great many casualties on account of this brave but rather foolish action.

After the united pushing back of the Confederate advance, by this drive of the Seventy-fifth and Twenty-fifth Ohio, the big Federal push came on Johnson's main line which was held by Colonel W. C. Scott's Brigade of the Fifty-second, Fifty-eighth, and Forty-fourth Virginia Regiments with the Twelfth Georgia out front. Johnson had Scott place his men in pairs with a space of about five paces between the pairs, and therefore spread Scott's men out so that they occupied most of the whole length of the crest including the two depressions (not including wooded hill on northern end of this crest). Soon after they were placed this way, a Federal regiment (probably the Twenty-fifth Ohio) appeared opposite Scott's left flank, but then disappeared into the woods that faced Scott's center and right flank. A little later the regiment emerged from the

⁴⁰ Official Records, vol. VII, pp. 488-489.
⁴¹ *ibid.*, vol. VII, p. 488.

woods and approached Scott's right flank. Scott tried to close his men to the right, while he sent ahead two companies of skirmishers to meet a company of Federal skirmishers that were a little in advance. After firing once, Scott's two companies withdrew to the main regiment. Then fierce fighting took place between Scott's right and center (the Forty-fourth and Fifty-eighth Virginia) plus the Twelfth Georgia and the whole line of McLean's (Twenty-fifth and Seventy-fifth Ohio). Scott had his right flank fire by having the front rank fire and then fall back three or four paces to the rear and lie down and load, thus being protected while they were loading. But after this had been going on awhile, Scott noticed that some of his men were going further back than was necessary and some were lying on their faces without doing any fighting. Scott tried to get them back by using words and threats which didn't work, so he started riding over them with his horse and this drove them back into the battle. However, not all of Scott's men acted cowardly. Many of them were very brave. Major Ross of the Fifty-second Virginia, Lieutenant Charles Y. Steptoe, and William H. Clare (Scott's sergeant-major) are particularly mentioned by Scott as being outstanding in the battle. After the firing between the Fifty-eighth Virginia, Forty-fourth Virginia, Twelfth Georgia and the enemy became particularly furious, the Forty-fourth Virginia was withdrawn from the depression in the center to about thirty paces in the rear of the Fifty-eighth and was told to lie down so they wouldn't be hurt. Scott says that the reasons for this were, "1st, owing to the depressed nature of the ground they occupied, the enemy could do them great damage, while they could do the enemy but little; and 2nd, because I wanted them as a reserve in case the Fifty-eighth should give way."⁴² However, as soon as Scott's attention was directed elsewhere, many of the men of the Forty-fourth Virginia rushed forward again and joined the Fifty-eighth in the fight and the rest of the Forty-fourth joined some other men (probably the Twelfth Georgia) farther to the right. At about this time General Johnson was almost captured. Not knowing his position, he ordered the Forty-fourth Virginia to fall back, but the Richmond Zouaves of the Forty-fourth under Captain Alfried, seeing the dangerous position that Johnson was in, disobeyed their orders and



Looking up to the top of the center hill of Sitlington's Ridge. Notice the small depression on the right and then the beginning of the southern most hill of Sitlington's Ridge. The top of this center hill was largely held by the Twelfth Georgia along with the help of the Forty-fourth, Twenty-third and Twenty-fifth Virginia later on. The center of the Federal line attacked up this slope.

charged upon the Federals, thus saving Johnson from almost inevitable capture.

After the Twenty-fifth and Seventy-fifth Ohio took that first ridge (the lower one), they stopped and held that position unaided for the next hour and a half. McLean decided not to try to go farther as he realized that Johnson outnumbered him greatly and also the Confederates were almost screened from his view by the crest of the ridge. The upper parts of the Confederates' bodies were exposed when only when they were firing. They were completely protected when reloading. Also McLean's men were fairly well protected in this new position as they could hide behind the western side of that lower crest. "Both regiments (Twenty-fifth and Seventy-fifth Ohio) worked together with great coolness, and the men seemed only to be anxious to get steady aim when firing their pieces, without a thought of retiring. We held this position for at least an hour and a half before any troops arrived to re-enforce us. The enemy not daring to make the attempt to drive us back by a charge."⁴³ The *Cincinnati Commercial* gives a dramatic picture of the action of Colonel McLean and Major Reily when it said, "Where the fight was the hottest and the men seemed to waver, there you would see Colonel McLean and Major Reily, cheering their men, and by their own daring and coolness inspiring confidence and courage in the men. They say the Major actually became excited, and got to making stump speeches to his boys, telling them to 'wipe out the stain that had fallen upon the name of Ohio on other fields.'"⁴⁴

During this fight a Federal chaplain got permission to join the forces engaged in the battle, and he did this keeping right in the front, aiding wherever he could.

I think that it is of consequence to mention here that though it looks as if the forces of Johnson made a pretty poor showing due to the fact that they let McLean get as far as he did and then weren't able to drive him back, it was probably not as bad as that. As stated before, Jackson did not want to fight this day, as he thought that the most he could do was just to drive the forces of Milroy and Schenck out of McDowell. Jack-

⁴³ McLean, report, *Official Records*, vol. 42, p. 400.
⁴⁴ Moore, *The National Record*, vol. 42, p. 32.

son wanted to wait until the next day when he could get a chance to come in on the enemy's rear and thereby trap him. Therefore, I believe it to be very possible that Jackson decided just to hold his position on the mountain for the time being.

After McLean had held his position on the lower crest for over an hour, General Milroy decided to send reinforcements. He hadn't sent them before as he didn't think that the Twenty-fifth and Seventy-fifth Ohio could hold out until such reinforcements would get there. But now Milroy saw that McLean was holding his ground so he sent the Eighty-second and Thirty-second Ohio Volunteer Infantries up to the Confederate right, and the Third West Virginia Infantry Regiment up the turnpike. The Eighty-second and Thirty-second went up through a wooded ravine on to the upper crest where the middle hill was and tried to get on the Confederate right flank and turn it, and then try to get in the Confederate rear. They were protected by the woods until they were almost to the crest and then they came out into the open in a wild bayonet charge up the hill that was very destructive to the Confederate forces that were there (part of the Forty-fourth Virginia and the Twelfth Georgia). Several times the Confederate line broke and then was rallied on its reserve and brought back to its place. On seeing this heavy attack on his right flank, Jackson sent the Twenty-fifth and Thirty-first Virginia Regiments to help stop that attack on Johnson's right flank. When the Twenty-fifth Virginia arrived, Johnson put it on the right near the wooded hill at the northern end of the ridge. When the Thirty-first Virginia came up (the Twenty-first Virginia took its place on the turnpike), Johnson sent them up on that wooded hill at the extreme right. The fighting then became very heavy and fierce, but the Confederates were able to hold the crest especially with the Thirty-first on top of the wooded knoll at the extreme right which acted as sort of a flank movement on the Union flank movement. "The Federal soldiers knew General Johnson by sight, and, during the battle one time, being separated a little from his command, some of them bellowed out, 'There's old Johnson; let's flank him!' Johnson heard them, and waving his club in the air, exclaimed, 'Yes, damn you, flank me if you can.'"²²

²² John G. Cadee, *Four Years in the Stonewall Brigade*, 2nd ed. (Marietta, Georgia: Continental Book Co., 1921), p. 74.

During this time the Third West Virginia had been advancing up the turnpike and on the side of the mountain along side of the road. They ran into the Thirty-first Virginia before the Eighty-second and Thirty-second Ohio had reached the Confederates on the top of the hill. The firing became very brisk between these two forces. Part of the Thirty-first Virginia were up on the side of the hill and were thus able to get in on the rear of the Third West Virginia. Thus the Third West Virginia was exposed to the enemy fire on both its rear and front. The men of the Third West Virginia would first fire at their front and then turn and fire at their rear. Soon the Thirty-first Virginia men on the Federal rear left, as they had been called to go to the top of mountain and take position on the wooded knoll, previously mentioned. Now the Third West Virginia, which was partly in the open and partly in the woods, faced what was left of the Thirty-first Virginia on their front only 100 yards away. These Thirty-first Virginia men were partly protected by the crest of a small hill in the road there. This group of the Thirty-first Virginia was firing by groups or companies. One group would go to the top of the hill exposing only their heads and fire and then withdraw and another group would take its place (this based on the fact that the period between the firing of the Confederates was not long enough for a man to reload). The Third West Virginia took care of this type of firing by waiting each time until the Confederates exposed their heads and then fire. Even though many of the Third West Virginia were exposed, they suffered few casualties because of "the haste with which the enemy fired. The leaden hail went mostly above our heads, and that part (the left) of the regiment referred to as being in the woods, verified this assertion by their appearance when they left the field after the battle, for their caps and shoulders were covered with the bark and buds and twigs of the trees."⁴⁸ Also another reason why they didn't suffer many casualties was that soon the rest of the Thirty-first Virginia left to join its buddies on top of the hill, and the Twenty-first Virginia moved in to take its place on the turnpike. The Twenty-first said they encountered only some skirmishers at their position on the road. Therefore, the Third West Virginia must have with-

⁴⁸ Theodore F. Lang, *Loyal West Virginia from 1861 to 1865* (Baltimore: The Southern Pub. Co., 1885), pp. 226-227.

drawn some. While the Thirty-first Virginia were there, only 100 yards from the Third West Virginia, some of the men in Company C of the Thirty-first, who were from Harrison County in West Virginia, recognized some of their friends from home in the ranks of the Third West Virginia and they yelled at each other during the battle. "Lt. Col. Thompson whose coolness everyone admires, was, during the battle, writing a message, having the paper against a tree, when a bullet pierced the paper, sticking it to the tree. 'Thank you, I am not posting advertisements,' said the Colonel, 'and if I was, I would prefer tacks.'"⁴⁷

The Twenty-first Virginia had been marching slowly up the turnpike up Bull Pasture Mountain, a few miles to the rear. They would march and then halt for a rest. It was taking so long that they didn't think they would reach the top of Bull Pasture Mountain (not the same as Sitlington's Hill) that day and therefore would have to return to the bottom to camp for the night, when suddenly a messenger came up ordering them to rush to the front. They proceeded rapidly along the road until they ran into the Thirty-first Virginia. The Thirty-first Virginia men that were there on the road then, left to go to Johnson's aid and the Twenty-first formed a battle line across the turnpike. General Jackson arrived and personally ordered Lieutenant Colonel Cunningham (head of the Twenty-first Virginia) "to protect his men as much as possible and to hold the position at all hazards, and ended by saying in that sharp way of his, 'Tell your men they must hold the road.'"⁴⁸ The men of the Twenty-first then took their position behind trees and rocks, etc., with the determination that the Federals would not drive them away. But as mentioned before, they encountered only a few skirmishers.

While the Third West Virginia, Fifty-second and Thirty-second Ohio were making their attack, a six-pounder gun of the Federal artillery was put into action on Hull's Ridge. Captain Latham of Company B of the Second West Virginia Infantry had been detached for staff duty, so Sergeant Hammer in charge of Company B under the direction of Lieutenant Power took this gun of Johnson's Battery up an almost perpendicular

⁴⁷ Moore, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
⁴⁸ Woodland, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

cliff to the plateau on Hull's Ridge. It was the only gun brought into action during the battle (except the earlier firing of Hyman's Battery) and it caused no damage to the Confederate force. The Confederates used no artillery.

Now back up on the hill the Scott's Brigade was fighting strongly on the left and had driven the enemy back there and was hoping to be able to flank the Federals on that side. The Twelfth Georgia, part of the Forty-fourth Virginia, and the Twenty-fifth Virginia were holding the front, and the Thirty-first Virginia was holding the wooded hill on the extreme Confederate right. The Eighty-second and Thirty-second Ohio were making another heavy drive on the Confederate right, and at that time reinforcements in the form of General William Taliaferro's Brigade were again sent by Jackson to aid Johnson on the top of the hill. The Tenth Virginia Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Warren arrived first and it was sent to aid the Fifty-second Virginia on the left. Soon after the Tenth Virginia, came the Twenty-third and the Thirty-seventh Virginia. The Twenty-third Virginia under Colonel A. G. Taliaferro was sent to aid the Twenty-fifth Virginia which was running out of ammunition. The Twenty-third went forward and fired on the enemy that was opposing the Twenty-fifth Virginia and remained there under heavy fire from the enemy. The Thirty-seventh Virginia under Colonel Samuel Fulkerson was sent to the wooded hill on the right and to help the Thirty-first Virginia to stop the big drive of the Federals that was taking place there at that time and drive them off the hill. The Thirty-seventh rushed ahead and charged at the Federals on this hill, driving them to the base of the hill with the aid of the Thirty-first Virginia. Four companies of the Tenth Virginia which had been aiding the Fifty-second Virginia on the left were sent to aid the Twelfth Georgia and the rest of the Tenth Virginia was sent to the right to aid the Twenty-third and Twenty-fifth Virginia. After a while the Tenth Virginia was withdrawn to the sinkhole behind the hill to act as a reserve to reinforce any position that might need them.

A little later the Twenty-third Virginia was taken from the right where the Twenty-fifth was and sent to aid the Twelfth Georgia which was having a hard time. The Thirty-seventh Virginia was taken from the wooded hill (leaving it again to

the Thirty-first to defend) and sent to take the place supporting the Twenty-fifth Virginia which had been vacated by the Twenty-third Virginia. This shifting of troops around to the right had stopped the flank attack of the Eighty-second and Thirty-second Ohio. Then many of the Eighty-second and Thirty-second Ohio shifted over to aid the Seventy-fifth and Twenty-fifth in the center and the fighting became very furious at the center of the ridge, and that is why the Twenty-third was sent to the aid of the Twelfth Georgia. During this time Colonel Taliaferro, while leading the Twenty-third Regiment, got his horse shot from under him.

When the Twenty-third Virginia went to aid the Twelfth Georgia and the Thirty-seventh took its place, Johnson ordered the Tenth Virginia to go to the right in the ravine between the middle hill and the wooded hill of the ridge. It was beginning to get dark, and it was thought that the Federals might try to move up this ravine in the concealment of the coming darkness. The Tenth Virginia was to prevent them from doing this.

During this time, as it was getting dark, a group of Federals stole up in a dark bottom on the Confederate left and suddenly put up their flag about fifty yards in front of Scott's line and fired on Scott's men. Scott's men returned this fire and then all but about fifteen or twenty of them ran back to the rear, having been greatly surprised. Scott tried to rally these men by appealing to their State pride, and finally he was able to stop them after they had gone twenty or thirty yards to the rear. They then loaded and returned to the battle line and poured a deadly fire into this group of Federals who then turned and fled. Then Scott's men on his proposal gave "three cheers for Old Virginia."⁴⁹

Ever since the Eighty-second and Thirty-second Ohio began their flank attack, the six-pounder Federal gun had been firing from Hull's Ridge across the turnpike with little effect. When the Federal forces got mixed in hand-to-hand fighting with the Confederates, this gun on Hull's Ridge had to cease firing for fear of hitting its own men. Nevertheless, General Milroy ordered that two twelve-pounders of Johnson's Bat-

⁴⁹ Scott's Report, *Official Records*, 39, 512, p. 436.

tery be put in position to fire on the Confederates. This was not accomplished until after twilight, and then it was too late for them to come into action.

While most of this fighting was going on, the Second Brigade under Colonel John A. Campbell of Jackson's Army of the Valley was coming up the turnpike toward the point where you turn off to go up to Sitlington's Hill. As they were marching along the road, Major James C. Campbell of the Forty-eighth Virginia was wounded by a stray bullet from up on the hill. Lieutenant S. Hale, who had been near Major Campbell, rushed to the front of the column and told senior Captain Vermillion of the Forty-eighth that Major Campbell had been wounded. Vermillion would not take over the command of the Regiment and told Lieutenant Hale to give the command to Captain Harman who was next in rank. Harman also declined to take the command and suggested that Hale take it, and Hale told Vermillion, who consented to Hale's taking the command. Thus the command of the whole regiment fell into the hands of a Lieutenant. At about 7:30 in the evening the Second Brigade was ordered by Jackson to go up on Sitlington's Hill to aid Johnson. The Forty-second Virginia went first and when they got to the top of the hill, they were ordered to go into position on the wooded hill at the right where the Thirty-first Virginia had been for some time. They were to prevent any further attempt on the part of the Federals to turn the Confederate right flank. The First Virginia Battalion followed them up the hill and was ordered to occupy the same position as the Forty-second Virginia had occupied. After these two groups (Forty-second Regiment and First Virginia Battalion) had arrived in position on this hill, the Federals made no more attacks in that direction so they encountered no fighting.

Following the First Virginia Battalion came the Forty-eighth Virginia Regiment. When they got to the top of the hill they were sent to the right. Lieutenant Hale was told that the enemy had been pushed back on the right and that the Forty-eighth was needed on a hill to the left occupied by the Forty-fourth and Fifty-eighth Virginia and the Twelfth Georgia Regiments. Hale then halted his column and had the captains close up their companies while he told Colonel J. A. Campbell

(head of Second Brigade) of what he (Hale) had just been told, and also of the change in command of the Forty-eighth Regiment that had taken place. Colonel Campbell said the change in command was satisfactory and ordered Hale to move the Forty-eighth Virginia to the hill where the Fifty-eighth and Twelfth Georgia were. Hale then hurried his regiment to a point right behind the Fifty-eighth Virginia and then halted, closing up the regiment. He then had the Forty-eighth go to the front of the Fifty-eighth by filing the left companies into line in front of the Fifty-eighth and wheeling the right companies to the left and throwing them forward into line. Thus the Forty-eighth Regiment was now in front of the Fifty-eighth and a little to the left of the Twelfth Georgia. Then Hale had his regiment (the Forty-eighth Virginia) to fire several rounds at a line of the Federals that was in front of his left wing, after which General Johnson ordered them to cease firing and to lie down under a heavy fire from the Federals. When the Federals started firing again at the left of the Forty-eighth Virginia, Hale ordered the regiment to fire one round again and then Colonel Campbell ordered them to stop firing, and the regiment again lay down under the heavy fire of the Federals.

During the battle, the Seventy-third Ohio and the Second Virginia (or West Virginia) of Milroy's Brigade were not actively engaged. Three companies of the Seventy-third Ohio had been engaged in skirmishing earlier in the day but most of the Seventy-third was placed on the extreme right in McDowell on the other side of the river, in order to watch for a possible Confederate flank attack there. Company B of the Second Virginia (Federal) had been engaged in early skirmishing but the rest of the Second Virginia was "drawn up in line in full view of the fight, where it was held to support the artillery and advance if needed. It was an unenviable situation and the men were anxious to go forward and take part in the exciting and dangerous conflict but their duty was to await orders." They remained there in line in McDowell throughout the day, never getting in the battle.

At about 4 P. M., General Johnson was wounded in the ankle and had to leave the battlefield. General Talmage took John-

See Bruce S. Beaman, *History of the Fifth West Virginia Cavalry, formerly the Second Virginia Infantry, from August, Pennsylvania, July, 1861*, pp. 26-27.

son's place as head of the Confederate forces on the hill. Earlier in the battle, it is reported that Johnson had been told something funny and he laughed so hard that he rolled over backwards with his feet up in the air and his big toe got shot off. When this happened, Johnson swore and said, "Goddamn that Yankee."⁵¹

For the first couple of hours of the battle, there was a large Newfoundland dog, a mascot for one of the Federal Brigades, that ran back and forth along the battle lines, "barking and snapping at the flying missiles, but before the fight was over he fell, pierced by a score of balls."⁵²

By the time Johnson was wounded and had to leave the battlefield, night had come and the only way the opposing forces could see each other was by the flash of the fire from their guns as they fired. By 8:30 most of the Federal forces were out of ammunition. Soon after the Thirty-second and Eighty-second Ohio Regiments had come up into the battle, McLean had been informed that the Twenty-fifth Ohio was running out of ammunition and the Seventy-fifth was close to running out. By 8:30 most all of the Federal soldiers had expended their sixty rounds of ammunition apiece. Thus, for lack of ammunition and on account of the dark, McLean decided to retreat. He formed the Seventy-fifth Ohio in line of battle down below the crest of the hill so they would be out of the worst fire of the Confederates, and then marched them down the mountain and had them turn around when they got to the bottom in order that they could fire at the Confederates in case they should chase the rest of the Federal forces as they retreated down the hill. The Twenty-fifth, Eighty-second and Thirty-second Ohio Regiments then came down the hill, the Thirty-second Ohio being the last to leave the field. They had withdrawn in good order, taking most of their dead and wounded with them. After reaching the bottom of the hill, the Seventy-fifth, Twenty-fifth, Thirty-second and Fifty-second Ohio, joined by the Third West Virginia, marched across the bridge into McDowell. The shout for "Davis and the Confederacy" ran along the Confederate lines from the right announcing the retreat of the enemy.

⁵¹ This incident was related to the author by a Mr. Sibert Beverage who is a lawyer in Monterey, Virginia. His family lived in the region of McDowell when the battle took place.

⁵² E. B. Mumford, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

At about this time, the First Brigade, or Stonewall Brigade, came up the road within sight of Sitlington's Hill and could see no firing except for the occasional burst of flame from the artillery of the Federals on Hull's Ridge. The battle had ended.

Jackson had his whole army up now and a counterattack might have destroyed the Federals but it was dark now; the Confederate line was confused; the cavalry couldn't operate very effectively on that rugged ground, and it would be hard to take the bridge in the moonlight. Therefore Jackson decided not to make such a counterattack. Jackson's men had held their position on the mountain against the Federal attacks, and this seemed to be sufficient for the time being to Jackson. Jackson says, "Every attempt by front or flank movement to attain the crest of the hill, where our line was formed, was signally and effectually repulsed. Finally after dark, their force ceased firing, and the enemy retired."⁵³

The Union forces in this battle were 2,268 men. This is divided up as follows: 469 men in the Twenty-fifth Ohio, 444 men in the Seventy-fifth Ohio,⁵⁴ 416 men in the Thirty-second Ohio, 439 men in the Third West Virginia, and 500 men in the Eighty-second Ohio.⁵⁵ There were other Union forces that were not engaged in the battle. The total Union force at McDowell included the following: Connecticut, First Cavalry; the Indiana Wilders Battery of Light Artillery; Batteries I and K of the First Ohio Light Artillery; the Twelfth Independent Battery of Ohio Light Artillery; the Twenty-fifth, Thirty-second, Fifty-fifth, Seventy-third, Seventy-fifth, and Eighty-second Ohio Infantry Regiments; Battery G of the West Virginia Light Artillery; the Second and Third West Virginia Infantry Regiments, the Fifth West Virginia and part of the First West Virginia Cavalry.⁵⁶

The Confederate forces in the battle totaled about 4,000 men. Johnson's Army of the Northwest had 2,800 so with them and

⁵³ *Official Records*, op. cit., p. 472.

⁵⁴ The number in the Seventy-fifth Ohio is divided as follows: Company A, Capt. Friend, 40 men; Company F, Capt. Morgan, 31 men; Company I, Capt. Fry, 61 men; Company C, Capt. Harvey, 11 men; Company H, Capt. Pilcher, 32 men; Company E, Capt. Foster, 40 men; Company G, Lt. Murey, 40 men. This information was obtained from McLean's Report, *Official Records*, op. cit., p. 488.

⁵⁵ Milroy's Report, *Official Records*, op. cit., p. 488. This was also found in *Montgomery*, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵⁶ Frederick M. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines: Dyer Pub. Co., 1908), p. 389. This information is also found in *Battles and Leaders*, op. cit., p. 282.

Taliaferro's Brigade there were about 4,000.⁵⁷ Campbell's Brigade was only slightly engaged and the Stonewall Brigade and V.M.I. Cadets were not engaged at all.

The Federal casualties, as a result of this Battle of McDowell, were 256 dead, wounded and missing (26 killed, 227 wounded, 3 missing).⁵⁸ The Eighty-second Ohio lost more than any other regiment as it once was exposed to a cross fire by the Confederates. Eleven Federal officers were wounded and none killed.

The Confederate losses were 498 killed and wounded (75 killed and 224 wounded).⁵⁹ The most heavily hit regiment was the Twelfth Georgia due to their advanced position beyond the crest and also they were in the center of the field. This Twelfth Georgia lost 156 men and 19 officers. One company lost all of its officers except the Fourth corporal. Captain Furlow of Company D, Captain Patterson of Company I, Captain McMillan of Company C and Captain Dawson of Company A, all of the Twelfth Georgia, were killed. Captain Mark Blanford of Company K lost an arm. Captain Richard Davis of Company G died later of a flesh wound in the thigh that he received at McDowell. Other Confederate officers killed and wounded at McDowell are as follows: Killed—Colonel Gibbons of the Tenth Virginia, Captain William Lang and Lieutenant Carson of the Fifty-second Virginia, Lieutenant Gregory of the Twenty-third Virginia, Lieutenant Dye and Lieutenant Fletcher of the Thirty-seventh Virginia. Wounded—General Johnson; Colonel Harmon, Captain Dabney and Captain Humphreys of the Fifty-second Virginia (Colonel Harmon remained in the field after being wounded), Colonel Smith and Major John C. Higgenbottom of the Twenty-fifth Virginia, Major Campbell of the Forty-eighth Virginia, Captain Matheny of the Thirty-first Virginia; Captain Terry, Lieutenant Wilhelm and Lieutenant Key of the Thirty-seventh Virginia, Captain Saunders, Captain Williams, Lieutenant Southall, Lieutenant Payne, and Lieutenant Garland of the Twenty-third Virginia, and Lieutenants Crawford and Meyers of the Tenth Virginia.

After the battle began, General Jackson left Sitlington's Hill and stationed himself on the turnpike with a high-pow-

⁵⁷ Owen F. Morton, *A History of Highland County, Virginia* (Monterey, Va.: Published by author, 1911), pp. 121-122.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 122; Henderson, op. cit., p. 200; *Battles and Leaders*, op. cit., p. 201.

⁵⁹ *Battles and Leaders*, p. 201.

ered telescope with which he could watch the battle. In this way he could see that the Confederate right guarded the road which Johnson couldn't see, and at the same time could send forward necessary reinforcements. Jackson's chief of ordnance, Lieutenant Hugh H. Lee, did a good job in seeing that Jackson's orders were carried out in regard to the way the troops should go into action. Lee was wounded later in the day and had to leave the field. Johnson reports that his surgeon, R. W. Lunday, did a good job in preparing for and taking care of the wounded. Also Surgeons Opie and Etheridge did a good job on the field for the Confederacy (Etheridge was wounded during the battle). Major Williams of the Thirty-seventh Virginia, Major Walker of the Tenth Virginia, W. B. Pendleton, General Taliaferro's Adjutant General, and First Lieutenant Philip A. Taliaferro, General Taliaferro's aide-de-camp, are all mentioned by Brigadier General Taliaferro as having done a good job during the battle.

The firing during this battle was mainly small arms plus the one ineffective battery on Hull's Ridge. Hyman's Battery did little firing after the battle began. Mr. Oren F. Morton says that "Judging from the cartridge boxes of the Ohio men, there were fired in the battle of McDowell, 300,000 bullets, one in 400 finding a living target."⁶⁰ Since the Confederates were on the top of the hill, many of them shot high. This is evidenced by the fact that one-half of the Federal wounded were able to walk from McDowell when they withdrew. Thus the wounds were in the upper half of their body.

Jackson gives the reason why he did not use artillery in this battle when he reports that, "Our own artillery was not brought up, there being no road to the rear by which our guns could be withdrawn in event of disaster, and the prospect of successfully using them did not compensate for the risk."⁶¹

After the battle was over, there was still a chance that the Federals might try another attack, so General Taliaferro put most of the regiments under cover of ravines, etc. He had the Forty-eighth Virginia form in line of battle where the Twelfth Georgia had been. They remained there until daylight with two men from each company out as pickets. The Forty-second

⁶⁰ Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁶¹ Official Records, *op. cit.*, p. 472.

Virginia staying on the hill to the right until late without fires, thus were very cold. The First Virginia Battalion stayed with the Forty-eighth Virginia until the moon went down, and then the First Virginia left the field, going back to the road for provisions as had most of the other regiments. General Taliaferro had men to carry off the dead and wounded and to collect the weapons of the Confederate dead and wounded and those which the Federals had left. The next morning, John D. Imboden came to Jackson and asked Jackson if he could be of any service as he was going to Staunton. Jackson asked him to wait a minute while he wrote a telegram to be sent to President Davis from Staunton. Imboden describes Jackson writing this message in the following way, "He (Jackson) took a seat at a table and wrote nearly half a page of foolscap; he rose and stood before the fireplace pondering it some minutes; then he tore it in pieces and wrote again, but much less, and again destroyed what he had written, and paced the room several times. He suddenly stopped, seated himself and dashed off two or three lines, folded the paper, and said, 'Send that off as soon as you reach Staunton.' . . . I read the message he had given me. It was dated 'McDowell,' and read about thus: 'Providence blessed our arms with victory at McDowell yesterday!'"⁶²

V

To Franklin and Back to the Valley

After withdrawing from Sitlington's Hill, the Federal forces joined the rest of their force in McDowell, had supper and went to sleep. General Schenck then decided to withdraw from McDowell. He tells of his decision to withdraw saying, "There is a large army in the hill about us. This place is indefensible altogether, by the unanimous agreement of the officers, in our present condition and with our relative forces. I find at least two of the regiments without ammunition and not a particle of forage. The horses are starving. We must retreat tonight. I am sending off trains and all property for which there is any transportation. At 2 A.M. I will get the troops in motion. This is a sad experience for the first day of arrival, but nothing else seems to be thought of. We shall probably be followed by the enemy. The general command-

⁶² Imboden, article in *Bullies and Leaders*, op. cit., pp. 291-292.

ing we expect to re-enforce us with any force he has."⁶³ Therefore, Schenck sent what supplies he had wagons for and the wounded off on the road to Franklin, and at 1 A.M. the soldiers were awakened and told to retreat quietly to Franklin, leaving their campfires burning. The Twenty-fifth Ohio was the last regiment to leave McDowell and it, along with a squadron of Connecticut Cavalry (of the First Battalion Connecticut Cavalry) under Captain Fish, covered the Federal retreat. Before leaving, the Federals burned their commissary store at the west end of McDowell, threw some boxes of ammunition into Crab Run near the bridge, burned some ammunition and a lot of "hard bread." There were some goods that they didn't have time to burn. Much of their camp equipage, some cases of Enfield rifles, "one hundred head of cattle, which they had stolen, being mostly milch cows,"⁶⁴ and all of the traps that belonged to the two Federal sutlers, Anderson and Harper. They did not get time to bury their dead, either. Many of their dead were piled in the Presbyterian Church and in some of the houses. It is reported that they even burned some of their dead in the building that had their commissary stores. After leaving McDowell, they marched until 8 A.M., when they halted at the Forks of Waters and put up a temporary field hospital on the Vandevender farm, and then arranged their forces to meet any attack that the Confederates might make on them. At 2 P. M., they broke camp again and proceeded on towards Franklin. As Schenck's men retreated, the people of the surrounding country, including the women, turned out to blockade the roads and to hinder Schenck's flight. They cut down trees and placed them along with other obstructions on the road. This resulted in the Federals having to abandon many disabled wagons, some artillery and clothing.

After the battle, Jackson called off the movement on the Federal rear that he had planned for the next day, as he realized that Schenck would probably retreat that night. At dawn on the 9th, Jackson discovered that he had been right. The Federals had disappeared. Jackson then sent his forces into McDowell to get rations, and then hurried on with most of his forces, led by Company B and another Company of the Sev-

⁶³ *Official Records*, vol. 32, pp. 22-23.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 32, p. 22. (From an account in the *Lynchburg Republican*).

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enth Virginia Cavalry under Captain J. Q. Winfield and Captain Sheets, to chase the Federals.

Jackson sent Captain Hotchkiss, a topographical engineer, to ride back to the Valley and get a company of cavalry which was on guard there, and then move to block the North River and Dry River Gaps of the Shenandoah Mountains by which Fremont might later try to join Banks near Harrisonburg. Jackson told Hotchkiss to have those passes blocked by daylight of the 11th. Hotchkiss rode over sixty miles in the next two days and was able to get those passes blocked by the prescribed time. (Later when Lincoln telegraphed Fremont to move to aid Banks, Fremont had to answer that the road was blocked and he couldn't do it.) Jackson also sent Captain Shoup and his Company H of the Seventh Regiment Virginia Cavalry to block Brock's Gap. Captain Massie's Company of cavalry was sent to blockade the road from Shove's Fork to Franklin. Captain Shoup proceeded to Brock's Gap and blockaded it by chopping down trees on each side, so as to block the road. The other men blocked their assigned gaps in a similar fashion.

Jackson left some cavalry and the Corps of Cadets in McDowell under Lieutenant Colonel Preston. They were instructed to bury the Federal dead and guard the prisoners and captured materials. After burying the dead, the Corps of Cadets were to march without knapsacks, carrying only the barest necessities and two days' cooked rations and join the rest of the force on its way to Franklin. The Cadets and the men of the cavalry proceeded to bury the dead at a low bluff on the west side of the street going through McDowell. Some of the men took the shoes off of the dead Federals before burying them and in one instance Colonel Preston caught a man cutting the buttons off of a dead Federal's coat. (Buttons were scarce to Confederate soldiers.)⁶⁵

Also when Jackson's men came into McDowell, they captured some Federals who had been left behind. Lieutenant Colonel Constable of the Seventy-fifth Ohio had gone to a house a little to the west of McDowell the night before to await the arrival of the rest of the Federals as they retreated

⁶⁵ Some years later these Federal dead were transferred to some national cemetery.

up the road. Constable's cousin was to notify him when the troops moved, but he forgot to. Therefore, Constable was left behind and was picked up by the advance Confederate cavalry as it went up the road. Also ten men of the Seventy-third Ohio who had been put on picket duty couldn't be found when the Federals left town, and they were left at their posts, not knowing of their army's retreat. They were then captured by the Confederates who were able to find them.

The Confederates did not really begin an earnest pursuit of Schenck until the 10th of May. They had only gone a short distance by the end of the 9th. A few miles outside of McDowell, Jackson stopped at a farmhouse and had his men lie down on the grass while he got a drink of water. Seeing a young boy sitting on the porch watching him, Jackson admonished the boy telling him he should be out working the fields instead of wasting his time watching the troops.⁶⁶ The Stonewall Brigade was right behind the cavalry of Winfield and Sheets with the rest of the forces behind them. About six or seven miles northwest of McDowell, they came to a fork in the road. One fork was designated by a signpost as the Staunton-Parkersburg Turnpike and went southwest to Monterey, and the other fork (right one) went north but had no sign. General Winder, who was in charge of the lead, didn't know which fork to take so he sent back to Jackson for orders. At this time, Major Mercer, the First Brigade quartermaster, came up from the rear and told Winder that it was reported at Staunton that Jackson had put him (Winder) under arrest for not bringing his brigade up fast enough at McDowell. Then Jackson came up from the rear, and said that this was not true but the incident had caused some embarrassment to both Generals. (Before Jackson became the head of this army, he had been the head of the First Brigade and therefore was extremely interested in it.) Jackson then instructed the men to take the right-hand road, and they now began a hurried forced march in hopes of catching up to Schenck. As the Federals retreated, they set fire to fence posts and the woods along the way which made a sort of smoke screen to conceal their retreat. Jack-

⁶⁶ Shortly before this happened, Jackson had been sharp towards someone else. One of his aides had asked permission to stop off at his home, which was on the road they were traveling, and visit his family and then pick Jackson up on his return. Jackson, being a stickler for discipline, refused the man's request.

son, himself, remarked how clever a maneuver this was. As Jackson's men came closer to Schenck, they had to feel their way along carefully through the smoke while being fired upon by Federal skirmishers and cannons. Jackson had detachments of skirmishers on either side of the road in the woods to protect the column from ambushes.

Jackson's men ran into the Federals in force about a mile south of Franklin in the afternoon of the 11th of May. On this chase of the Federals, the Confederates had captured a few prisoners and some stores along the way, but had done no serious harm to the Federals. Schenck speaks of this retreat by saying, "... (we) withdrew in good order toward Franklin in the early morning. Our march back to Franklin, which occupied three days, was orderly and was not seriously molested by Ashby's Cavalry or any force of the Rebels in pursuit."⁶⁷ However, Jackson had chased Schenck and Milroy far enough back so that it would be difficult for them to join Banks. When Jackson's lead encountered the main force of the enemy a mile south of Franklin, General Winder sent the Fourth Virginia ahead to find what was there. As the Fourth Virginia went up, it was fired upon and so retreated but Winder sent them back. General Schenck had formed a battle line across the narrow valley leading into Franklin. A few early maneuvers by Schenck caused Jackson to halt his force, and this gave Schenck time to get his men in advantageous positions before Jackson's men could discover where the Federals were. Schenck had the Fifty-fifth Ohio support a battery that fired shells on the Confederates. Jackson's batteries returned the fire but did no damage. Then Schenck ordered his men to retreat quickly into Franklin through the pass to lure the Confederates into the pass. It was the Fourth Virginia, as mentioned above, that went forward and received a volley from the Federals. They retreated and then Jackson came to the front and halted the entire force for the rest of the day. Some skirmishing took place during the afternoon. Schenck's men remained in battle line during the night, sleeping on their arms, expecting Jackson to attack. On Monday the 12th, Jackson called for a half day of rest and prayer to compensate for the men having

⁶⁷ *Buttles and Landers*, pp. 208, p. 208.

to fight in the case of the 11th, which was Sunday.⁶⁸ Then Jackson, leaving a thin line of his men to disguise his movement, headed back to McDowell and the Valley.

Jackson gives the following reasons for not fighting here at Franklin, "The junction between Banks and Milroy having been prevented, and becoming satisfied of the impracticability of capturing the defeated enemy, owing to the mountainous character of the country being favorable for a retreating army to make its escape, I determined, as the enemy had made another stand at Franklin, with a prospect of being soon re-enforced, that I would not attempt to press farther, but return to the open country of the Shenandoah Valley, hoping through the blessing of Providence, to defeat Banks before he should receive re-enforcements."⁶⁹ Also Jackson had to hurry if he wanted to defeat Banks because any minute now he might be called to Fredericksburg or Richmond, or Ewell would be called away and Jackson would have to face Banks alone.

It was a good thing that Jackson did withdraw when he did, because if he had remained to fight he would have not only have had to beat the total force of Schenck and Milroy (which was about equal in number to Jackson's), but also have to beat Fremont's command which included the large Blenker Division. Blenker's Division after having rested only about twenty-four hours at Petersburg, departed from there with Fremont at 4 A.M., on May 12th, leaving behind many supplies because of lack of immediate transportation. They arrived at Franklin on the 14th of May, and remained there ten days getting things in order and resting the troops.

Jackson returned to McDowell picking up the cavalry and supplies left there and then marched on, leaving the mountains and camping at Lebanon Springs on the 15th. He rested at Lebanon Springs until the morning of the 17th. The 16th had

⁶⁸ Jackson gave the following order in regard to this one-half day of rest: "Soldiers of the Army of the Valley and Northwest,—I congratulate you on your recent victory at McDowell. I request you to unite with me this morning in thanksgiving to Almighty God for thus having crowned your arms with success, and in praying that He will continue to lead you on from victory to victory, until our independence shall be established, and order be thus secured which God is the Lord. "The mountains will hold those who are at ten o'clock A.M. this day, in their respective positions." From *Speech Nicholas Randolph, The Life of General Thomas J. Jackson* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co., 1874), p. 200.

⁶⁹ *Official Records*, 39, 282, p. 282.

been spent as a day of prayer in accordance with an order of President Davis appointing that day as a day of prayer and fasting. The Virginia Military Institute Cadets were unable to get the assent of the Board of Visitors of the Institute to remain with Jackson, even though Jackson had asked that they be allowed to remain with him. Therefore, on the 17th the Cadets departed from Jackson's command, taking the fork in the road that leads to Staunton and Jackson's army took the North Fork. On the night of the 17th, Stonewall's men encamped at Mt. Solon where Jackson met Ewell who had ridden over from Elk Run Valley. On Sunday, the 18th, they observed religious services and then at dawn of the 19th, they started again and crossed the North Branch of the Shenandoah River on a bridge of wagons with planks on top. On the 20th, Jackson reached Harrisonburg where he joined Ewell's Division and they began Jackson's brilliant march down the Shenandoah Valley, chasing Banks to the Potomac River and scaring Washington, D. C., half to death. As they marched from the Valley, a reporter with Jackson's army writes, "Northwestern Virginia is now nearly free from the scoundrels. I do not know our destination, as General Jackson never tells any one his plans, not even his brigadiers."⁷⁰ Little did he know what a victorious march up and down the Valley his commander was about to commence.

VI

Conclusion

I have now given the complete story of the Battle of McDowell. I will try now to point out the important faults and good points of the various leaders and the significance that this battle had on the rest of the war.

In the first place, Jackson was very skillful in his movements from Elk Run Valley to McDowell. He kept it almost a complete secret. Banks thought Jackson had gone to Richmond, and Milroy did not know of Jackson's movement on him until the day before the battle occurred. On arriving at McDowell, Jackson made another brilliant move by occupying Sitlington's Hill which was the most strategic position around there with a command of the valley below.

⁷⁰ *Monte*, op. cit., p. 45. (from an account in the *Lynchburg Republican*).

Now, it is difficult to judge whether Jackson was right or wrong in not planning to attack Milroy right away but waiting until he could make a movement on Milroy's rear the next day. If Jackson had charged his forces down the hill and along the turnpike into McDowell, he would have lost more men due to the deadly fire of Hyman's Battery commanding the bridge, and also he would have just chased the Federals out of the town and not have done them much harm. But in remaining on the hill, it resulted that Jackson did not do much harm to the Federals (256 casualties, only 25 of whom were killed). Of course, this was due to some brilliant movements by Milroy and Schenck. They, by making a surprise attack on Jackson (who was supposed to be the aggressor) disrupted Jackson's whole plan, and by fighting bravely until after dark, prevented Jackson from making a counterattack and thus were able to escape in the night from a position in the Valley that would not be envied by any military commander. Also, even though a smaller attacking force, Milroy's men inflicted heavier loss on the Confederates than they themselves suffered (Confederate loss was 498, of whom 75 were killed). I believe that Jackson had underestimated the ability of his opposing Generals. Jackson had formulated his plan of attack probably believing that his opponent General was similar in manner to the cautious, slow-moving Banks. Here, Jackson made a grave mistake. Also, I think that Jackson made a mistake in not bringing some cannon to the top of Sitlington's Hill. I believe Jackson was wrong in his reasoning that the risk of losing a gun was not worth the effect it might have had on the Federals. If he had had a gun on the hill, he could have done a great deal of damage at close range on the Federal forces as they came up the hill and then at a little further range, he could probably have done as much damage to the Federal reserves crowded into McDowell as he was able to do against their forces on the hill in a small-arm battle. Also, he may have been able to knock out Hyman's Battery on the little hill behind the Presbyterian Church, and thus would be able to cross the bridge with a much greater chance of suffering little loss.

After the battle was over Jackson was much too slow in chasing after the Federals. It is true that he could not do much at night, but he could have had scouts out to determine

when the Federals were withdrawing so that he could take his troops into McDowell, feed them, give them rest, and have them ready to begin the chase as soon as dawn came.

In the battle, Jackson did a much better job of sending reinforcements to the top of the hill than did Schenck. Schenck and Milroy, though brilliant in their attack and subsequent retreat, did not follow the basic principle of warfare of concentration of forces. Only a little over 2,200 men out of 6,000 available were used in the battle. But Schenck again did a good job when he made his retreat. His covering of his retreat with a smoke screen was a master stroke, and then when he reached Franklin, Schenck did a very good job of lining up his forces in such a way to stop Jackson (although Jackson probably would have stopped there, anyway).

Thus, in the actual battle itself, I believe that Generals Schenck and Milroy did a better job than did Generals Jackson and Johnson. Jackson seemed to be too cautious in his movements which, by the way, is unusual for Jackson compared to the rest of his famous Shenandoah Valley campaign.

However, though Jackson did not excel very greatly in the actual battle, and did not destroy as many of the enemy as may have been possible, he did accomplish his purpose of separating Banks and Fremont and even did more towards helping the Confederate cause than he had planned.

Jackson's main purpose in attacking Milroy at McDowell was not to win a decisive victory there, but to drive Fremont's advance (Milroy) far enough back so that he could not aid Banks when Jackson returned to the Valley to attack Banks. Thus, though Jackson had not defeated the little Federal army at McDowell or even broken it up, and as a whole the Federal Generals Milroy and Schenck did a good job, Jackson accomplished his purpose. He drove them back to Franklin, had the passes through the mountains blockaded, and then returned to the Valley where he joined Ewell and successfully drove Banks back to the Potomac River, almost destroying his (Banks') army. Then Jackson returned up the Valley, escaping the Federal forces that had been delayed in combining to crush him. Jackson had, by the Battle of McDowell and its subsequent chase, effectively neutralized the 20,000 men under

General Fremont in the Mountain Department for the time being. And not only did he neutralize them from joining Banks, but he had brought about the collapse of Lincoln's and Fremont's plan to march on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. Fremont had been forced to abandon the South Branch Valley which was to have been the path to the above mentioned railroad. A little later, after Banks' defeat, the Mountain Department was abandoned, Fremont was relieved of his command (by his own request), and the Union forces of northern Virginia were put under the command of General Pope on June 26th, 1862.

Possibly still more important than the aid Jackson's Battle of McDowell gave towards his defeating Banks and ending the Federal drive on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad was the fact that this Battle of McDowell may have been indirectly the force that saved Richmond from being captured by McClellan. Alexander S. Webb says that, "The sudden intelligence of Banks' reverses, and the fact that Jackson was on the Potomac, caused the wildest excitement at Washington. McDowell, who had already taken up his line of march to join McClellan, was turned back and ordered to put 20,000 men in motion at once for the Shenandoah, in conjunction with Fremont, to capture the force of Jackson and Ewell; and on the 24th McClellan was advised by telegraph from the President that he must not look for co-operation from that quarter. "*So here again did the promising plan on the Peninsula fall through.*"⁷¹ Jackson had only been able to defeat Banks and reach the Potomac because of his separation of Fremont from Banks by the operations at McDowell. It was this defeat of Banks that caused Washington to countermand their order of May 17th for McDowell to proceed down the Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad to co-operate with McClellan. And McClellan had said that the only way he could take Richmond was to get this additional help of McDowell's Corps. At this time, McClellan had an army of about 120,000 men facing an army under General Johnston and then General Lee of about a third of McClellan's force. But McClellan was extremely cautious, and also he believed the Confederate force to be much larger than it was. Therefore, when someone today

⁷¹ Webb, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

looks at the forces of the two opposing armies on the Virginia peninsula at that time, he must not come to the immediate conclusion that McDowell's force would have had no effect one way or the other on McClellan's taking Richmond. You must realize that McClellan could not then at that time see the picture as clearly as we can today, and that he may not have been using, as just an excuse, the idea that he needed McDowell's Corps to enable him to take Richmond. General McClellan may have really believed this, and if McDowell's Corps had gone to the peninsula at that time, McClellan might have marched ahead and taken Richmond. He certainly would have had the power to do so. G. F. R. Henderson, William Allen, and many others agree with this view.

Therefore the importance and success of Jackson's victory on the Union forces at McDowell is clear. Yet where can the blame be put for allowing Jackson to succeed as he did, certainly not on Milroy or Schenck? Of course, some blame can be placed on Fremont and Banks who were too slow in their movements, but the main blame, I believe, goes to President Lincoln and his Secretary of War, Stanton. Lincoln had divided this area, that Jackson fought in under one command (Lee's), into three separate commands independent of each other thus dividing and weakening his force at the beginning. Then the unmilitarily trained Lincoln and Stanton gave orders that further confused and weakened their forces. One such foolish command was to have Blenker's Division, that had reached Winchester, to march and join Fremont 120 miles away in the Alleghenies for some foolish plan, instead of having the division march forty-five miles by the turnpike and join Banks who was faced by the skillful foe, Jackson. A. Kearsey in his book, *A Study of the Strategy and Tactics of the Shenandoah Valley Campaign 1861-1862*, gives a clear description of Lincoln's meddling in military affairs when he says, "Lincoln had done all he could to prepare for a successful war, but he didn't realize that detachments made for the defense of the capital reduce the fighting strength, and that if the enemy are free to manoeuvre, [sic] they can concentrate against the forces allotted for defense. He did not realize that it is best to defeat the enemy's main army and then the capital will be in no danger from it. By constantly changing his plans, he did not realize that he allowed his opponent time to add to his resources and

to his fighting strength, reduced the possibilities of surprise, and of gaining the initiative for his army. He did not understand that, by making separate commands, he was dissipating his forces so completely that co-operation in a common action and concentrations of force were impossible, and that his procrastination gave opportunities which led to successes and a constant raising of his enemy's morale."⁷²

Kearsey's idea of raising morale here brings up the point that Jackson had won a victory that had a great effect in raising the Confederate morale. Up to the time of the Battle of McDowell, the Confederates had been faced with one disaster after another, beginning with the fall of Ft. Donelson, then the occupation of Nashville, the fall of New Orleans counteracting the "fruitless victory of Shiloh,"⁷³ followed by the fall of Yorktown and Williamsburg and then the surrender of Norfolk. Then came the victory of Jackson at McDowell, and the retreat of the Federals to Franklin, followed by the defeat of Banks in the Shenandoah Valley by Jackson. This was, beyond a doubt, a great morale builder for the Confederates.

Thus, Jackson's operations at McDowell separated Fremont from Banks, cancelled the Union drive on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, enabled Jackson to defeat Banks, causing Lincoln to withhold McDowell from McClellan and maybe preventing McClellan's taking Richmond, and also greatly raised the morale of the Confederate citizens. With Jackson's ability to do all of this, it is no wonder that such poems as the following one were written about him.

⁷² A. Kearsey, *A Study of the Strategy and Tactics of the Shenandoah Valley Campaigns 1862-1863* (London: Aldershot, Gale, and Polden, Lt., 1931), p. 11.
⁷³ *Ibid.*, op. cit., p. 200.

Stonewall Jackson's Way

"Come, stack arms, men; pile on the rails,
 Stir up the camp-fire bright;
 No matter if the canteen fails,
 We'll make a roaring night;
 Here Shenandoah brawls along,
 There burly Blue Ridge echoes strong,
 To swell the Brigade's rousing song
 Of 'Stonewall Jackson's way.'

We see him now—the old slouch hat
 Cocked o'er his eye askew—
 The shrewd, dry smile—the speech so pat—
 So calm, so blunt, so true.
 The 'Blue Light Elder' knows them well—
 Says he, 'That's Banks; he's fond of shell—
 Lord save his soul! we'll give him'—well,
 That's 'Stonewall Jackson's way.'

Silence! ground arms! kneel all! caps off!
 Old Blue Light's going to pray;
 Strangle the fool that dares to scoff;
 Attention! it's his way!
 Appealing from his native sod,
 In *forma pueris* to God—
 'Lay bare thine arm; stretch forth thy rod;
 Amen! 'That's Stonewall's way.'

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Ah maiden! wait and watch and yearn
 For news of Stonewall's band;
 Ah, widow! read with eyes that burn
 That ring upon thy hand;
 Ah, wife! sew on, pray on, hope on,
 Thy life shall not be all forlorn—
 The sue had better ne'er been born,
 That got in 'Stonewall's way'."